

CREATION AND REDEMPTION IN ISAIAH 40-55

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*in memoriam*

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## ABSTRACT

Isaiah 40-55 offer a fertile ground for the study of the interaction between the two biblical motifs of creation and redemption. Whereas von Rad's thesis of creation being subordinated to salvation is no longer acceptable, the two are still taken to be one and the same act of YHWH (Rendtorff/Hermisson), with salvation understood as a new creation overcoming YHWH's judgement (Harner/Haag), and proclaimed as a transforming wonder in a universal context (Stuhlmüller).

Our re-examination of 27 pericopae from four basic genres in Isaiah 40-55 shows that the predominant theme is YHWH's sovereignty. The disputations depict YHWH as both creator of the cosmos and lord of history in contrast to the idols dependent on human workmanship. A second group of disputations, which includes the so-called trial speeches against Israel, stresses YHWH's faithfulness despite Israel's sinfulness. The exile does not signify YHWH's defeat; it is the judgement of the same sovereign God. The trial speeches argue for YHWH's incomparability on the ground of his control over past and present events as witnessed by Israel. By contrast the idols are impotent and unable to help. The salvation oracles portray YHWH as the creator of both his own people and the enemies. The connotation of power instead of novelty or intimacy in the creation language is substantiated by our survey of the use of ברא (br') in the Hebrew Bible. Similarly, the description of YHWH as redeemer not only points to divine forgiveness, but also involves the demonstration of YHWH's power in Babylon's downfall and Zion's restoration. Theophanic imagery of the transformation of nature is used in the salvation promises to illustrate YHWH's supreme sovereignty, and his 'hidden' act through Cyrus' victory is finally acknowledged by the nations. The macro-palistrophic structure of these 16 chapters confirms that the crisis of faith during the exile lies in the challenge of the pagan imperial powers to YHWH's sovereignty.

Based on the present study, further research on the unity of the book of Isaiah and the interplay of the two motifs of creation and salvation in other poetic books (the Psalter and Job) is called for. Meanwhile, our understanding of the doctrine of creation should not be governed by the legacy of *creatio ex nihilo*, and our interpretation of soteriology must give equal emphasis to both dimensions of reconciliation and liberation.

## PREFACE

It was during the fumbling stage before Christmas in my year of supervised postgraduate studies that the Revd Professor John C L Gibson challenged me to embark on an exploration of the theological theme of either creation or redemption in the Hebrew Bible. I chose to begin with the latter, not realizing that soon I was going to encounter both motifs once again in the captivating poetry of Isaiah 40-55. For all the fresh inspirations of the 1991 seminar on 'Old Testament Images of God' and the senior Hebrew class on the text of Second Isaiah by my learned teacher, who has taught me Hebrew exegesis since my divinity days in the early 80's, I am deeply grateful.

I am equally, if not more, indebted to my first supervisor, the Revd Dr A Graeme Auld, who is also one of my first teachers of the Hebrew Bible at New College. Both his scholarly originality and kindness to students (amidst his many duties as Postgraduate Associate Dean and subsequently Dean of the Faculty, not to mention the prompt responses even during his Sabbatical in 1992) have become tall examples for me as I am about to join the company of biblical scholars and teachers.

I am also extremely grateful to my mentor in Old Testament Theology, the Revd George W Anderson, Professor Emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament Studies at the Edinburgh University. He not only had allowed me continual access to his personal library, but also painstakingly read through the entire draft of this thesis. The various critical comments made by my three teachers have done much to improve the final outcome of my research work, though I remain responsible for any of its shortcomings.

The New College Library and the Harvard-Andover Theological Library, where I had the privilege of working between September 1990 and May 1991, have each lived up to their reputation as 'the most user-friendly library' across the Atlantic. I am always thankful for the efficient service provided by the most competent teams of library staff.

Apart from the Overseas Research Students Award, my four-year postgraduate work has been jointly sponsored by the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong and the Langham Trust in London. To the prayerful support of the Revd Dr John R W Stott, the Revd Dr Wilson W Chow, the Revd Geoffrey M Gardner, Mr Enoch K Wong, and many others in both Canada and Hong Kong, I hereby set down my heartfelt gratitude. A special word of thanks is also due to my friend in Boston, David W C Pao, who has thrice helped by hunting down bibliographical material for me in the middle of his own rigorous research schedule.

Without the material and emotional sacrifices of my parents and my parents-in-law, I would not be able to afford the luxury of academic pursuit. Thus it has been an exceptional joy to witness my father-in-law coming to a serene faith in Christ during the last four years when he suffered from a difficult illness. My wife and I have also been greatly blessed by the constant fellowship with the Edinburgh Chinese Church and the Chinese Christian Church of Rhode Island for our nine-month sojourn in New England.

My wife, Wing-yee, is an unfailing source of encouragement and strength throughout the past fourteen years of our blissful marriage; she has no doubt proved herself to be a true *רצון מידה*. Not even the use of the alleged 'language of heaven', however, is adequate to express my profound appreciation and love for her. As my study is finally drawing to a close, we are expecting the birth of our first child by the end of year, but I do not imagine that my labouring over a couple of hundred pages will reflect in any way the intense parturition to be experienced by her as a mother. To say the least, we are both humbled by the wonderful miracle of life and the awesome responsibility of parenthood.

It is therefore with a vivid sense of indebtedness that I declare the following thesis to be composed by myself and the result of my own research.

Stephen S K/ Lee  
Edinburgh, *Easter* 1993

## CHAPTER 1

### PROLEGOMENA

#### 1.1 Introduction

Any critical examination of the biblical motifs of either creation or redemption, and indeed the proper relationship of the two, will recognize a very fertile ground in Isaiah 40-55, commonly known as Deutero- or Second Isaiah. Within these sixteen chapters, we find not only large and varied groups of Hebrew words for divine 'creation' and 'salvation', but also a distinctive interaction unique to the Hebrew Bible between these two theological motifs.

Second only to the Psalter, Isaiah 40-55 may represent statistically the next highest concentration of salvation vocabulary within the Hebrew Bible.<sup>1</sup> But

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics are based on the concordances of Mandelkern (1896) and Even-Shoshan (1985).

since the collection of the former spans from the period of the first temple to that of the second, whereas the compilation of the latter originates from just a generation or two around the exile, Isaiah 40-55 seem to offer a starting point more sharply focused than the Psalms for our exploration of the biblical motif of salvation. Among the eight Hebrew roots for 'salvation' discussed by Sawyer (1972:106-109), four of them, namely, **ישע** (to save), **נצל** (to liberate), **עזר** (to help), and **מלט** (to rescue), are used in these sixteen chapters. The other four, namely, **פלט** (to succour), **חליץ** (to deliver), **פרק** (to set free), and **פצה** (to release), are at any rate found largely or, in the latter two cases, exclusively in the Psalms. Moreover, the two roots of **גאל** (to redeem) and **פדה** (to ransom), which in our opinion should be legitimately added to Sawyer's lexical group of Hebrew words for 'salvation',<sup>2</sup> are also present in Isaiah 40-55, with the verb **גָּאַל** (redeemed) and its participle **גֹּאֵל** (redeemer) playing a theologically distinctive role. All together the six Hebrew roots for 'salvation' occur fifty-one times in total<sup>3</sup> within these

<sup>2</sup> For the use of **פדה** and **גאל** in semantic alignment with one or more of Sawyer's 'salvation' words, see Pss 31:6; 34:18-23; 44:27; 72:12-14; 106:10; & 119:153-155.

<sup>3</sup> **ישע** 20 times, **גאל** 17 times, **עזר** 7 times, **מלט** 3 times, and both **פדה** and **נצל** 2 times.

middle chapters of the prophetic book. As a contrast, they appear only thirty-one times in Isaiah 1-39 and twenty-two times in Isaiah 55-66.

On the other hand, Eberlein (1986:73-82) has identified nine different divine 'creation' terms in Isaiah 40-55. They include ברא (to create, 16 times), עשה (to make, 24 times), יצר (to shape, 15 times), פעל (to work, 3 times), נטה (to stretch out, 5 times), יסד (to found, 5 times), רקע (to spread out, 2 times), צמח (to sprout, 5 times), and כון (to establish, 2 times). Once again we may want to add נפח (to extend, Isa 48:13) and נטע (to plant, Isa 51:16) in order to complete the list. As a result, there are altogether seventy-nine occurrences of these eleven 'creation' words within the sixteen chapters compared with forty-seven occurrences in Isaiah 1-39 and twenty-one occurrences in Isaiah 56-66. The contrast is further highlighted by the following three observations. Firstly, within the first thirty-nine chapters, all the eleven appearances of נטה are within the context of divine judgement. If they are to be excluded, the number of total occurrences will be reduced to thirty-six in Isaiah 1-39, making the seventy-nine cases in Isaiah 40-55 stand out even more. Secondly, among the three most popular terms in the middle chapters (ברא, עשה, and יצר), only עשה maintains its frequency of use in the rest of the book



(twenty-four times in chapters 1-39 and ten times in chapters 56-66). On the contrary, ברא appears only once and four times before and after chapters 40-55,<sup>4</sup> whereas יצר is found merely twice in Isa 22:11 and 37:26, and is entirely absent from the final eleven chapters. Thirdly, not the whole range of 'creation' terms are present outside these middle chapters. The three roots נטע, רקע, and טפח are not found in the first thirty-nine chapters, while in addition to יצר, another four roots, namely, פעל, יסד, רקע, and טפח, are absent from chapters 56-66 as well. Hence, from a statistical point of view, there may be in Isaiah 40-55 an even higher concentration of creation vocabulary than that of salvation vocabulary.

Nevertheless, the ultimate ground for beginning our investigation into the relationship of creation and redemption with Isaiah 40-55 lies in the fact that here the two theological motifs are brought to bear on one another in the most unique manner. Assertive statements on YHWH's supreme control as the sole creator intersperse both polemical disputations and salvation speeches, where the saving power of YHWH is being argued and proclaimed in hyperbolical imagery as well as picturesque language. Time and again the prophet insists

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<sup>4</sup> They are Isa 4:5; 57:19; and 65:17-18 (thrice).

on YHWH's dual role as creator and redeemer of his people. Such a dynamic interaction between the two fundamental motifs of the Hebrew Bible is perhaps only to be found also in a handful of psalms, but is certainly lacking in either the beginning thirty-nine or the concluding eleven chapters of the book of Isaiah. Hence we are justified in focusing our study on creation and redemption within the scope of the sixteen chapters of Isaiah 40-55 without necessarily subscribing to any particular stance on the question of authorship and unity of the book of Isaiah (Seitz 1991:1-35).

## **1.2 Von Rad: The Subordination of Creation to Salvation**

Critical discussions on the theological relationship between creation and redemption within the context of the Hebrew Bible begin with von Rad's 1936 essay, 'Das theologische Problem des alttestamentlichen Schöpfungsglaubens' (ET: 'The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation'), in which he sets out his main thesis 'that in genuinely Yahwistic belief the doctrine of creation never attained to the stature of a relevant, independent doctrine'; it is rather 'invariably related, and indeed subordinated, to soteriological considerations' (ET:62). The interest shown in the divine economy of this world as a rational

and intelligible cosmos does not represent an original characteristic at the heart of Yahwism. Such an unadulterated doctrine of creation reflects the Egyptian influence passed on to Israel by travelling teachers of wisdom, and not until the doctrine of redemption has first been fully safeguarded may the doctrine of nature be absorbed as a means of divine self-revelation to broaden and enrich instead of encroach or distort it.

Although his examination of the evidence includes also a number of Psalms and the book of Genesis, von Rad has drawn his conclusions predominantly from the texts of Deutero-Isaiah. He observes that the prophet, when speaking of YHWH's redeeming grace, has to struggle against disbelief, and in order to arouse confidence in the unlimited power of his God, the prophet often adverts to the fact of the creation of the world. In other words, von Rad argues that creation has never appeared in its own right, never formed the main theme of an announcement, and never supplied the motive of a prophetic utterance. On the contrary, it performs no more than an ancillary function in the course of the prophetic argument by providing a foundation for faith, 'a magnificent foil for the message of salvation, which thus appears the more powerful and the more worthy of confidence' (ET:56).

In addition, the more fundamental theological aspect of the doctrines of creation and redemption is yet to be discovered as the readers of passages like Isa 43:1 or 44:24 are struck by the ease with which the two doctrines have been brought together. Here von Rad claims that 'the doctrine of creation has been fully incorporated into the dynamic of the prophet's doctrine of redemption' (ET:57). Commenting on Isa 51:9-10, which he refers to as 'the most remarkable of all for our theological inquiry' (*ibid.*), von Rad asserts:

'The prophet maintains with passionate conviction his belief that what appear theologically to be two distinct acts are in fact one and the same act of the universal redemptive purpose of God. At this point the doctrine of creation has been fully absorbed into the complex of soteriological belief, so fully absorbed indeed that the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of redemption are both included in the one picture of the battle with the primaeval dragon.' (ET:58)

The mythological conception of the struggle against the chaos monster serves as a significant indicator that the doctrine of creation has been known in Canaan from extremely early times; hence von Rad agrees that it is not necessarily of a late origin. He

has in fact clarified at the beginning of his essay the problem as 'one of theology rather than of the history of religion' (ET:53).<sup>5</sup> In our view, any critical response to von Rad's thesis should no longer be entangled in the red herring of the alleged lateness of the doctrine of creation within the history of belief of ancient Israel. We must focus instead on examining whether von Rad is being true to the biblical texts in maintaining that creation faith either 'remained a cosmic foil against which soteriological pronouncements stood out the more effectively, or it was wholly incorporated into the complex of soteriological thought' (ET:63).

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<sup>5</sup> This is why Childs (1992:384) has criticized Schmid (1973) for replacing 'Israel's own witness to creation with a history-of-religion's reconstruction akin to early Canaanite religion from which Israel is alleged to have emerged'. Childs is of the opinion that such 'a retreat to an earlier *religionsgeschichtliche* dogma of the nineteenth century' cripples the theological understanding of the biblical texts. But it remains doubtful whether Childs is correct when he continues to argue that 'the present canonical shape has subordinated the noetic sequence of Israel's experience of God in her redemptive history to the ontic reality of God as creator' (385).

### 1.3 Rendtorff: The Relevance of Creation to Salvation

Accepting von Rad's thesis of a soteriological understanding of the creation faith, Rendtorff intends to pursue more exactly the question of the internal relationship between creation faith and salvation faith in his essay, 'Die theologische Stellung des Schöpfungsglaubens bei Deuterocesaja' (1954:4). He confines his investigation to the texts of Deutero-Isaiah, focusing in particular on how the prophet has taken over statements of creation faith from the hymnic tradition and adapted them respectively in the two genres of disputations and salvation oracles. By paying closer attention to issues of form and tradition criticism, Rendtorff discovers in Deutero-Isaiah a more refined picture of the theological relationship between creation and redemption.

From the many echoes in motifs and language, Rendtorff observes that the proclamation of Deutero-Isaiah is undoubtedly rooted in the hymnic tradition. This is further supported by the prophet's predominant use of the participial style characteristic of hymns in his announcement of YHWH the creator. Nevertheless, there remains this very important distinction between the hymns which praise YHWH in the third person and the participial formulations of Deutero-Isaiah in divine

speeches of self predication such as Isa 44:24-28. It thus appears to Rendtorff that these hymnic statements are being transformed by the prophet 'from the subject matter of the reflection of the worshippers to the self statements of Yahweh demanding recognition' (5). Moreover, these formal changes suggest at the same time a shift in the function of the creation faith occurring in the two genres of disputations and salvation oracles found in Deutero-Isaiah.

A comparison between the word of disputation again in Isa 44:24-28 and a hymnic psalm like Ps 136 reveals immediately that more has in fact happened than the sheer taking over of the hymnic tradition in a different style by the prophet. Whereas in the psalm YHWH's acts are praised in the earliest time of creation of the world and in the oldest history of Israel's exodus and conquest, in the disputation the predications of YHWH extend from his past acts in creation and history into his guidance of present events and even promises of future salvation. The same can be said of other words of disputation like Isa 40:12-17, 21-24, 27-31; 45:9-13, 18-21; and 48:12-15. Everywhere 'creation faith speaks into the present situation' as 'the decisive element of the proclamation of Yahweh's act of salvation happening now and approaching immediately' (7). Creation faith and salvation faith are

no longer different contents of traditions juxtaposed together; both of them are part and parcel of the current prophetic message.

On the other hand, Rendtorff finds in the salvation oracle another decisive change of the hymnic predication of YHWH as creator. In the expanded messenger formula of Isa 43:1, YHWH is introduced as the creator of Israel rather than of the universe, and the two participial statements are uttered not in the form of an assertion but as a personal address. Henceforth there is an entirely new characteristic of the faith in YHWH the creator: just as YHWH is the creator of the world and, according to the disputations, so he can deal with it at his own discretion, his capacity as Israel's creator now means that he has indeed the power to help and deliver his own people. The point is 'therefore not to establish that it is Yahweh who has created the world and therefore also Israel, but Israel is addressed on the basis of the special relationship in which it stands with Yahweh' (8). Similarly in other salvation oracles apart from Isa 43:1-7,<sup>6</sup> it is always the divine promises of help and salvation concerning the liberation from exile, the return to Zion, and the reconstruction in the

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<sup>6</sup> Rendtorff (9) mentions Isa 44:1-5, 21-22; 51:12-16; and 54:4-6.



homeland that are underpinned and made more credible by the statements of creation. Consequently, Rendtorff concludes that the function of creation faith has changed in not just one but two ways with Deutero-Isaiah's taking over of the hymnic tradition. Not only has 'the reflection on Yahweh's act of creation as one great deed in the past' been replaced by 'an immediate connection with the salvation act currently happening', but 'the faith in Yahweh the creator has acquired a totally new "existential" relevance for the audience of the proclamation' (9).

Furthermore, Rendtorff discovers in Deutero-Isaiah instances where the concepts of creation and salvation are no more separate entities, but are blended into one another. Thus once again in Isa 44:24 the two consecutive participial predications, 'your redeemer' and 'your maker', are so mixed together that they are interchangeable, and their order becomes insignificant. Likewise in Isa 44:2-5 the same tendency to merge statements of creation and salvation is already present in the expanded messenger formula. But in the following salvation oracle proper YHWH's saving deed is manifested at the precise point where he shows himself as the creator. With YHWH creating salvation for his people, any distinction between creation faith and salvation faith is no longer conceivable. This is also the reason

why creation terminologies often appear naturally with YHWH's historical deeds.<sup>7</sup> Finally, an extremely condensed statement is to be found in Isa 45:6-7, where the extreme opposites of nature and history are combined into one single act of YHWH.

Similarly, in both Isa 41:8-9 and 44:1-2 expressions of YHWH having 'created' or 'chosen' Israel stand in parallel to one another. A comparison with Isa 42:6 indicates to Rendtorff that statements of creation, election, and appointment are merged so completely that the fundamental relationship between YHWH and Israel can be expressed in either way. In fact, 'the creation of Israel has happened in its election' (12), and a separation of the two traditions is no longer possible within Deutero-Isaiah.

As a result, Rendtorff concludes that Deutero-Isaiah has brought about a crucial change to the hymnic tradition of creation faith. YHWH's creation of the universe is no more a datum in the past, but has become an essential part of the proclamation of his present salvation. Above all the focus falls upon YHWH as the creator of Israel. The approaching saving act of

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<sup>7</sup> Rendtorff (11) cites Isa 42:9; 43:2 [*sic* 44:4?], 19; 45:8; 48:3, 7; and 54:16.

YHWH for his people does not just stand in close relationship with his creating and electing act in the past; the two in fact coincide absolutely with each other. As Rendtorff puts it, 'It is not only the same God who acts then and now, but it is one act of God, which happens on and on and to which Israel owes its existence and its salvation' (13, author's emphasis). Thus von Rad's thesis has been greatly enhanced by Rendtorff's detailed refinement, which adds a much desired subtlety to the originally rudimentary arguments.

#### **1.4 Harner: Creation as a Bridge for Salvation Then and Now**

Despite the fact that his essay is entitled 'Creation Faith in Deutero-Isaiah' (1967), Harner has actually focused on the relationship between creation and salvation in Deutero-Isaiah right from the beginning of his discussion. The major question he seeks to answer remains, 'How is the belief that Yahweh is the Creator of all the ends of the earth related to the conviction that he is the Redeemer, the sovereign Lord of history who has acted in the past and is about to act anew for the deliverance of his people?' (298).

Although Harner finds von Rad's arguments

for a soteriological understanding of creation faith in the Old Testament persuasive, he is not entirely happy with the view that creation faith serves no more than an ancillary function in Deutero-Isaiah's message. In his opinion, there is within the prophetic logic a much more indispensable role played by creation faith, even if it does not attain with salvation an equal independence of its own. On the other hand, he does not appear to be interested in form-critical matters like Rendtorff, but proposes to tackle the issue directly 'by examining the interrelationship of three themes in II Isaiah: creation faith, the Exodus tradition, and the expectation of the imminent restoration of Israel' (299).

Beginning with the last theme, Harner notes that the prophet correlates the imminent restoration of Israel sometimes with creation faith and sometimes with the Exodus tradition. Thus on the one hand this past event of YHWH's deliverance from Egypt provides a model for describing Israel's future salvation, while on the other hand the vocabulary of creation faith is employed to depict the imminent redemption of Israel. Such borrowing, however, only illustrates the pervasive influence of creation faith in the prophet's mind, it does not give direct expression to his creation faith, as references such as YHWH 'creating' Israel are no more than 'metaphorical descriptions of an event that remains

within the historical framework of salvation faith' (301,n.1).

Harner insists on examining only those direct and explicit statements of creation faith by the prophet for the understanding of the relationship between creation and redemption. He cites a number of texts<sup>8</sup> where there is no longer the poetic or metaphorical use of the language of creation to depict past or future events of salvation. In these passages he agrees that the belief in YHWH as Creator is used to authenticate the message of impending salvation. Nevertheless, he also argues that creation faith is more than just the supporting basis for the good news of imminent restoration; it is in fact an integral part of the prophet's proclamation to the people. As he puts it, 'Israel on her part needs to realize that Yahweh is Creator of all the ends of the earth, just as she needs to understand that he has the power to deliver her from exile' (302).

In addition to the future salvation of Israel, creation faith is also associated with other significant themes in the prophet's proclamation. The

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<sup>8</sup> They are Isa 40:27-31; 44:24-28; 45:11-13; 50:1-3; 51:12-16; and 54:4-8.

connection with YHWH's sovereignty or uniqueness is particularly noteworthy,<sup>9</sup> because in these passages creation faith is so closely interrelated with YHWH's supremacy that it becomes impossible to distinguish which is represented as the basis of the other. Furthermore, through its association with the motif of YHWH's unique sovereignty, creation faith is again related to salvation: 'As the sole God over all the earth, Yahweh is also sovereign over history and has power to work deeds of salvation' (302).

However, the most important role creation plays in the prophet's message of salvation appears in the relationship between the Exodus tradition and creation faith. Harner maintains that while the Exodus tradition does provide both the ground for believing in YHWH's new act of redemption and the descriptive imagery for depicting it, at other times the prophet also speaks more of the contrast between the 'former things' and the 'new things'. In fact, it appears that in Isa 43:18 the prophet even commands the people not to remember 'the things of old', which in its present context refers to the Exodus event. Thus Harner observes 'that II Isaiah is thinking in terms of discontinuity as well as

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<sup>9</sup> Harner here cites Isa 40:12-17, 21-24, 25-26; 45:18; and 48:12-13.

continuity between the original Exodus tradition and the imminent redemption of Israel in his own time' (p.304). The Exodus tradition is no longer adequate in itself to authenticate the new saving acts of YHWH, because the exile has apparently ended the old era of salvation history initiated by the Exodus. Memory of the past may even lead to despair by reminding the audience of their failure and YHWH's punishment. But this is precisely where creation faith functions most significantly as a bridge between the Exodus tradition and the expectation of the imminent restoration of Israel. It links together the old and the new eras of salvation by providing reassurance 'that the meaning and relevance of the Exodus tradition were not entirely lost in the recent tragedy of destruction and exile', and it also 'enables the prophet to announce, with a certainty that he would not otherwise have had, that Yahweh is about to restore his people to their homeland just as he brought them into it long ago' (304). Consequently, Harner thinks that creation faith has more than an ancillary function in relation to salvation faith; it is in fact an integral part of the prophet's proclamation. This is also why the prophet is seen to link creation faith with YHWH's imminent redemption rather than his deeds in the past.

As a conclusion, Harner suggests that

although the principle of *creatio ancilla historiae* remains valid, creation faith cannot be described as being absorbed into the structure of salvation faith. On the contrary, '[i]t plays a central role in the prophet's thought by serving as a fulcrum in balancing the Exodus tradition with the expectation of imminent restoration' (305). Consequently, creation faith in turn 'gives new vitality to salvation faith' (306).

### 1.5 StuhlmueLLer: Creative Redemption as New and Universal

Whereas Harner is of the opinion that passages where vocabulary of creation faith is borrowed to describe constitutive happenings in history do not give direct evidence for the function of creation faith in relation to salvation faith, StuhlmueLLer's Rome dissertation, published as *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (1970a), focuses its concern specifically on 'the role of creation within each theme of redemption' (6, author's emphases). This widely quoted monograph begins from von Rad's conclusion about the subordinate role of creation, and maintains 'that the idea of creation must be accepted as a secondary motif, thoroughly subservient to that of redemption and quite inexplicable without it' (Preface), but, as StuhlmueLLer also points out, it differs by 'refus[ing] to grant as a



general principle that Dt-Is argues from a pre-supposition of creation in order to establish a strong foundation for faith in redemption' (5, author's emphases).

The bulk of StuhlmueLLer's work (chapters four to nine) explores how this concept of creative redemption is being developed respectively within traditional motifs like the Exodus or the kinsman-redeemer, and special motifs of Deutero-Isaiah such as the first and last things, the creative word, the cosmic creation, and the various nuances of the creation vocabulary. In the introductory part, he observes first of all that the idea of creation usually appears not as the central element of the pericopae, but rather in either the introduction or the conclusion, 'where it anticipated or summarized what the prophet was announcing about the wondrous redemption' (233, see also chapter two on the literary genre of the poems, 16-40). He discusses as well the 'non-temporal aspects' of the various forms of the Hebrew verb and the 'spirit of contemporaneity' with the frequent use of the participle, which serves to highlight that 'creation is happening now in the moment of redemption' (56).

The notion of creative redemption is first developed in the traditional motif of Exodus. Passages

like Isa 41:17-20 and 43:16-21 summarize the prophetic account of Israel's new Exodus with creation vocabulary. YHWH's act of establishing a new paradise for his people will be both sudden and beyond the ordinary, and these exceptional qualities are expressed as 'creative'. The divine redemptive action in the new Exodus also extends wondrously and bounteously over the elements of nature, as a transformed desert meets Israel already along the route from exile back to home. The idea of a new creation thus recapitulates the glorious wonders YHWH is performing for Israel both on the way and at the end of this new Exodus. Secondly, passages like Isa 40:3-11 and 52:7-10 also employ allusions of a sacred procession related to the ritual of an annual renewal of the cosmos to describe Israel's new Exodus. The full liberation of YHWH's people is seen to include as well a wondrous transformation of nature in Israel's homeland, and that is why his redemptive action may be described as 'creative'. Thirdly, passages like Isa 44:27, 50:2, and 51:9-10 refer to the *Chaoskampf* motif, where the new Exodus is understood as a victorious battle against opposition forces and a wondrous revival of the natural environment. Consequently, a new perspective of YHWH's redemptive action is being emphasized by Deutero-Isaiah's original combination of the traditional Exodus motif and the language of creation, resulting in the picture of YHWH's redemption as 'more resplendent and

more energetic than that accomplished under Moses, overcoming all hostile opposition and settling his people in a land, fully transformed with such abundance and tranquility' (94).

According to Stuhlmueeller, Deutero-Isaiah's second innovation is his transferring the traditional concept of the kinsman-redeemer from its profane milieu to the theological arena. Isa 43:1-7 summarizes majestically how YHWH redeems his blood-relative Israel from slavery by recreating anew its family in the homeland, and Isa 54:1-10 applies the idea of redeemer marriage to YHWH's bond of love with Zion, who is also transformed from the barren widow into the happy and fruitful mother. Hence YHWH reveals himself as the kinsman-redeemer of his people, 'liberating his child from slavery or the childless widow from sterility and thereby becoming Israel's or Zion's maker and creator' (123). At the same time, divine creation is also seen in the context of the redeemer motif as an obligatory and personal act of YHWH.

Turning to the development of creative redemption within the special motifs of Deutero-Isaiah, Stuhlmueeller begins with that of 'First and Last', an important pair of terms on which scholars are ever producing new explanations of their precise meanings.

Without entangling himself with the extensive debate, StuhlmueLLer opts for what he describes as 'a more generic and therefore more universally accepted position': '"First" applies to prophecies already fulfilled, "Last" refers to prophecies still awaiting fulfillment' (136). In using creation vocabulary to depict the fulfilment of prophecy in the victories of Cyrus, Deutero-Isaiah 'announced the "last" redemptive act, to be "created" by Yahweh as sudden and surprising, superior over any previous act, and revelatory of the person of Yahweh himself' (143). This 'new' and 'last' redemption of Israel, however, is not to be considered as eschatological, because it does not represent the final and permanent order of a new state for the world. Furthermore, '[t]he lack of eschatology in Dt-Is implies also that Dt-Is's references to "first creation" are not fully thought out' (167). References to YHWH's initial creation of the universe are found in passages like Isa 40:12-31; 45:18-22; and 48:12-19, but 'the context of Dt-Is's thought was towards Yahweh's present lordship over the universe and over world history for Israel's sake' (168).

More significantly, Deutero-Isaiah develops for the first time in the Hebrew Bible a doctrine of the creative word as one of the most salient aspects of his

theology of creative redemption.<sup>10</sup> As Stuhlmueeller summarizes succinctly, '[t]he word is Yahweh at work in his plans and hopes for Israel; the creative word represents Yahweh as he acts on a cosmic scale, bringing his redemptive plan for Israel to completion' (p.192, author's emphasis). In fact, all the prophetic ideas of creative redemption are expressed in the general context of the divine word: 'the personal, transforming presence of Yahweh, with plan and decision, on a world-wide scene, in order to secure a new world of complete joy for his people' (191). The creative word of YHWH is therefore the all-powerful agent of divine re-creation for Israel.

So far Stuhlmueeller has examined the texts in Deutero-Isaiah where 'creation refers more immediately to the re-creation of Israel, only indirectly to Yahweh's creative action upon the universe' (193, author's emphasis). When he turns his attention to the third special motif of the prophet, namely, Yahweh's first creation of the universe, Stuhlmueeller believes he is on the threshold towards the

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<sup>10</sup> Stuhlmueeller discusses passages like Isa 40:1-11, 26; 41:4, 17-20; 43:1-7; 44:24-28; and 55:10-11 in relation to this special motif of the creative word of YHWH by Deutero-Isaiah.

important declaration of universal salvation. Isa 45:8 provides a bridge from the creation of Israel to the creation of the cosmos, as an active role is assigned to the universe in the creation of a newly redeemed Israel. YHWH who orders the universe is understood to be also the one who has created it in the first place. Then in Isa 44:24-45:7 YHWH's redemption of Israel is described 'as involving the world power, especially the victorious march of Cyrus' army across the world' (208). This world redemptive activity of Yahweh is also summarized as a continuation of his initial creation of the world. But in Isa 45:9-13 the creation of the world is not just a conclusion from YHWH's redemption of Israel, it is also a principal argument for YHWH's control over the universe he has created. In other words, YHWH as the creator of the cosmos is thus able to make use of the universe and foreign kings like Cyrus for his redemptive purpose. Here Stuhlmueeller proposes to identify in Deutero-Isaiah the following sequence of argument (204, author's emphasis):

- 'a. By transforming Israel's entire life from chaos to prosperity, Yahweh merits to be considered Israel's creative redeemer.
- b. Because Cyrus occupies a place of prime importance in the creative redemption of Israel, Yahweh's creative action extends to the Persian conqueror and his worldwide

activity.

- c. Thus Yahweh appears more clearly than ever before as re-creator of the world, and as such must have been its first creator. Therefore, Yahweh can use the universe and foreigners just as he sees fit.'

Hence Stuhlmueeller is of the opinion 'that the idea of cosmic first creation developed out of Dt-Is's appreciation of Yahweh's cosmic-creative redemption of Israel' (208).

Furthermore, in Isa 42:5-7 and 49:8-9a+5-6, which Stuhlmueeller calls 'introductory Servant Songs' (206), the vocation of the servant is first described against the background of world creation, and then it is directed expressly to the redemption of the gentiles. It therefore appears that the conclusion reached about world creation by Deutero-Isaiah is being applied to YHWH's redemptive plan in these two short poems:

'Beginning with Israel's traditional faith in Yahweh Redeemer, but now recognizing that same redemption on a cosmic scale, Dt-Is proceeded to announce not only the cosmic creative redemption of Israel, but also the work of cosmic first creation by Yahweh. From this latter position, he could better appreciate the positive contribution of foreigners to Israel's redemption. When this fact was challenged by his fellow exiles, the prophet moved to the most

startling good news of all, in the 'ebed yhwh songs, the redemption also of foreigners' (236).

StuhlmueLLer, however, concedes that the cause-and-effect sequence between the 'introductory servant songs' and the rest of Deutero-Isaiah's proclamations or even between these two poems themselves is not at all certain, 'but a link of one idea growing out of the other is much more likely in a master poet and theologian like Dt-Is, than an explanation of mere coincidence' (208).

Finally, a survey of the creation vocabulary of Deutero-Isaiah shows that the prophet does not depend on pre-exilic traditions about creation. It thus confirms the observation that the thinking of Deutero-Isaiah does not begin with cosmic first creation, but with Israel's redemption, and from Israel's redemption his thought moves forward to cosmic creation, which then brought him to announce the redemption of the universe.

In conclusion, StuhlmueLLer maintains that Deutero-Isaiah's idea of creation serves

'to enhance many features of the prophet's concept of redemption, transforming it into an exceptionally wondrous redemptive act, performed with personal concern by Yahweh for his chosen people, bringing them unexpectedly out of exile, into a new and



unprecedented life of peace and abundance,  
with repercussions even upon the cosmos and  
world inhabitants'. (233, author's  
emphases).

More important still, a study of Deutero-Isaiah's theology of creative redemption reveals an important general development in his thinking. The prophet begins from the new redemption of Israel and moves on to YHWH's creation of the entire world of Israel. From YHWH's creating power over the cosmos of Israel, the prophet recognizes YHWH as the creator of the universe. Ultimately, the prophet proclaims the universal redemption of this world on the basis of YHWH's creating authority over it. This is what Stuhlmueeller describes as 'the thesis of "Creative Redemption" in Isaiah 40-55' (237).

#### **1.6 Haag: God as Creator and Redeemer**

Stuhlmueeller's dissertation seems to have gone unnoticed by Haag,<sup>11</sup> whose essay, 'Gott als Schöpfer und Erlöser in der Prophetie des Deuterojesaja' (1976), endeavours to expound the relationship of creation and

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<sup>11</sup> Haag's beginning survey includes all the three articles by von Rad (1936), Rendtorff (1954), and Harner (1967), but he cites only the earlier article of Stuhlmueeller (1959).

redemption in Deutero-Isaiah on the basis of Albertz's study, *Weltschöpfung und Menschenschöpfung, Untersucht bei Deuterojesaja, Hiob und in den Psalmen* (1974). According to Albertz, no satisfactory conclusion concerning the relationship of creation and redemption has so far been reached because of a false assumption of a single concept of creation. On the contrary, there are actually two separate traditions of creation in Deutero-Isaiah, each of them constituted by its distinct content, setting, and function. The first tradition is about the creation of heaven and earth. The setting of this tradition is found in the hymns, and its function is to praise the power and lordship of YHWH over his creation, which in Deutero-Isaiah is always directed in dispute against various objections. The second tradition is about the creation of individual human beings. Its setting is the individual lament and the salvation oracle, where it points to the close association between the creator and his creature. In Deutero-Isaiah its function is to establish trust in the new act of YHWH for his people. Since the first tradition of world creation has to do with divine sovereignty rather than act of salvation, Albertz concludes that the close parallel of creation and redemption is only possible with the second tradition of the creation of human beings. Haag agrees that an investigation into the relationship between creation and redemption in Deutero-

Isaiah cannot be conducted without careful considerations of either form-critical or tradition-historical matters. Nevertheless, the question remains whether 'the distinction of a tradition of creation of the world and of humanity [is] really sufficient to grasp the special character of Deutero-Isaiah's statements of creation and its meaning' (194).

In the first part of his essay, Haag proposes to follow Albertz in re-examining the various pericopae in Deutero-Isaiah where statements of either the creation of the world or the creation of humanity or even both at the same time (what Haag calls 'the mixed forms') are to be located. He begins with the three disputations in which the dual motifs of YHWH as both the creator of the world and the lord of history are found. Whether Isa 40:12-31 is taken as one speech with three consecutive parts (after Westermann and Albertz) or as three independent words of disputation (after Elliger, with whom Haag agrees), the central theme of the prophetic argument is 'always about Yahweh's lordship in creation and history and not about the one or the other' (196). Thus Albertz is correct in observing that here the lordship of YHWH in history is not a conclusion from the creation faith of Israel, but both motifs stand parallel to each other, just as they are in their form-critical origin, the descriptive

psalms or the hymns. The same can be said about Isa 45:18-19, which, *pace* Westermann, Haag considers as an independent pericope. 'In its construction the structure of the descriptive psalm appears clearly, praising Yahweh's power in creation and history' (197). Furthermore, in Isa 48:12-16 Haag notes a special significance attached to the call of YHWH. Israel, who is the people 'called' (v.12) by YHWH, is to understand that YHWH, who has 'called' (v.13) the world into existence, now 'calls' (v.15) Cyrus to execute his plan of salvation. Consequently, in all three disputations according to Haag the theme is neither creation nor salvation, but the incomparability (*Einzigartigkeit*) of YHWH the true and only God. It is about his unique supremacy as the one able to work with unmatched power in both creation and history.

Turning to the pericopae where statements of the creation of human beings are found, Haag agrees with Albertz 'that Deutero-Isaiah has taken over these statements of creation not, as one has until now assumed in view of the participial constructions, from the descriptive psalm, but that they are originally at home with the genre of the salvation oracle' (198). The same idea can be found correspondingly in the individual lament, with which the responding salvation oracle belongs in the form-critical setting of a cultic prayer

for divine intervention. In the salvation oracles of Deutero-Isaiah such as the one in Isa 43:1-7, the prophet applies the idea of the creation of human beings to YHWH's election of Israel, just as in the individual laments the ideas of a person's creation and birth are always inseparable from one another. This is also supported by the fact that in Isa 41:8-16, the idea of creation is absent while the motif of Israel's election by YHWH is highlighted with special emphasis. Nevertheless, the creation process referred to by the prophet must not be restricted to a single act in the earliest time of ancient history. Haag argues that here the function of the statements of the creation of Israel must be determined with the horizon of the theme of the prophetic oracles of salvation. 'It is then no longer merely about the waking of the trust in Yahweh, but about the dependence of Israel on Yahweh's creative initiative, about the discontinuity of its history to be overcome in the situation of the exile' (199). In Isa 43:14-15 the original context of lament and salvation oracle again subsides when the creation idea is employed under the theme of YHWH's powerful control (*machtvolle Führung*) over Israel. Then in the following pericope of vv.16-21 the statement of YHWH's creation of Israel (v.21) stands in the closest connection with the announcement of his intention to make something new after the judgement. Hence Haag suggests that the theme

here is 'the discontinuity in Israel's history by Yahweh's revelation of power' (200). Moreover, in both Isa 44:1-5 and 21-22 the prophet applies the creation act of YHWH clearly to the election of Israel, and in both cases the reference to YHWH's control over Israel's history and continual existence remains obvious. Finally, Haag reports that Albertz considers the creation statement in Isa 54:4-6 to be an expansion to the original salvation oracle, because it refers to YHWH's sovereignty, which is reminiscent of the disputing motifs and the descriptive psalm. However, the theme of YHWH's unique power and sovereign control is clearly to be identified in both the salvation oracle as a whole and the creation statement itself. Once again Haag observes that 'the idea of the creation of human beings consequently is not absolutely dependent on the genre of the salvation oracle or the lament assigned to it; it can also appear together with the idea of the creation of the world and form an integral element with this in the subject matter of Yahweh's powerful control in the history of Israel' (201-202). It is to these mixed forms in Isa 44:24-28; 45:9-13; and 51:12-16 that Haag now directs his attention.

Albertz attempts to explain the co-existence of both types of creation statements in Isa 44:24-28 by the dual nature of the prophetic proclamation. In the

announcement of YHWH's election of Cyrus, there is the message of deliverance as well as the need for disputation. However, Haag argues that the point of dispute is not so much why YHWH makes a pagan to be his anointed, but, as vv.27-28 show, whether YHWH is able 'to grapple with ungodly power in the imminent rescue of his people' (202). It thus follows that both ideas of creation are serving in this word of disputation as a proof of YHWH's sovereign control over the destiny of Israel. Similarly Haag disagrees with Westermann's view that in Isa 45:9-13, the prophet is arguing with his people over the designation of Cyrus as YHWH's anointed. On the contrary, the disputation seems to be more about the absolute sovereignty of YHWH over his work. Hence the idea of the creation of the world, which is expanded here by the reference to the creation of humanity, underlines the unique authority of YHWH over the execution of his plan through Cyrus. The same theme of YHWH's absolute sovereignty is also to be found in Isa 51:12-16, where the two types of creation statements are juxtaposed together in order to give the necessary emphasis to the message of salvation.

Having re-examined all the relevant passages in Deutero-Isaiah, Haag confirms with Albertz the existence of two distinct ideas of creation instead of one single and general concept of creation within the

prophetic message. The close study of these texts, however, indicates that both ideas of the creation of the world and humanity are no longer independent traditions in Deutero-Isaiah's preaching. The statements of world creation appear always in connection with the motif of YHWH's lordship in history; they are in fact two aspects of the larger theme of the incomparability of YHWH over both the realm of nature and history. On the other hand, the statement of Israel's creation means always more than its election by YHWH; the prophet has also in mind the restoration of the chosen people after the judgement. In highlighting the possibility of a continuity of Israel's history of salvation even after the exile, the idea of the creation of humanity again serves as an integral element of the larger theme on YHWH's powerful control over his people Israel. Consequently, Haag argues that 'Deutero-Isaiah judges the relevant ideas of creation not by their original life setting, which they have had at one time in the descriptive psalm and in the individual lament, but by their effectiveness in the context of a subject matter specifically for his proclamation' (205). That is to say, the prophet has never been restricted by the boundaries of these two traditions of creation. This, according to Haag, is shown most clearly in pericopae where the two ideas of creation are mixed together:

'Thus in the statements of world creation



the lordship of Yahweh in creation and history requires a specification which takes into consideration the destiny of Israel; and conversely in the statements of human creation the revelation of the creative power of Yahweh in the control of his people requires a reference to the uniqueness of this God, which excludes every doubt on the feasibility of his resolution of salvation from the start' (205).

As a result, Haag proposes to investigate in the second part of his essay more closely the content and origin of this theme about YHWH's sovereignty in Deutero-Isaiah. In other words, the traditio-historical question of Deutero Isaiah's creation statements is to be raised anew.

The starting point for the investigation of this theme which stands behind the creation statements of Deutero-Isaiah is to be located in the prophet's announcement of the kingship of YHWH. Haag notices that although the royal title is used only four times in Isa 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; and 52:7 (*sic*; מֶלֶךְ here is the verb), it functions strategically in both the polemics against the deities of the nations as well as the comforting words of YHWH's commitment to Israel (205-206). The reign of YHWH re-established in Zion signifies not only the fulfilment of the promised

salvation to his own people, but also the simultaneous judgement over the idols of Babylon. Moreover, Haag insists that the ground for the taking over of the royal title from its Canaanite context lies undoubtedly in Israel's experience of the salvation history: 'For Yahweh has powerfully protected his chosen people from all adversaries and thereby shows himself over and again as the stronger God' (207).<sup>12</sup> The transference of the royal title to YHWH results in Israel's confession to the exclusive claim of YHWH, and consequently the deprivation of power of all other deities or even their ultimate denial. That is how this idea of kingship, while originating from a polytheistic background, is also capable of expressing YHWH's unique sovereignty.

Haag then moves on to point out that the same content is also found in the creation account of the Yahwist in Gen 2. On the one hand, the Yahwist introduces YHWH as the sovereign lord of heaven and earth, thus unmasking every creaturely pretension to deification as impotent and trivial. On the other hand,

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<sup>12</sup> Haag (206) thinks that the kingship of YHWH is based on the more dynamic kingship of Baal vis-à-vis the static kingship of El, who is king of the pantheon by virtue of his dignity as the father-god. On the contrary, Baal has to prove his superior power first in the circle of the deities before he may become king.

the structure of the Yahwistic creation account is equally determined by Israel's fundamental experience of YHWH's guidance and control. There is an unmistakable correspondence between the creation of human beings (Gen 2:7) and Israel's election to be YHWH's people, the garden of Eden (v.8) and the promised land, the possibility of humanity's participation in life (v.9) and YHWH's *torah* with regard to the divine community on earth. As a result, the Yahwistic account is very different from the Priestly report, which focuses on the details of world creation and its order; it betrays rather a thematic parallel to the prophetic proclamation of YHWH's kingship.

Haag is certain that a traditio-historical connection must exist between the accounts of Deutero-Isaiah and the Yahwist. Apart from the theme of YHWH's kingship being important for both authors, there are other hints of a contrived relationship such as the explicit mentioning of the garden of Eden in Isa 51:3 and the employment of the paradise motif in the prophetic proclamations of Isa 41:17-20 and 44:1-5. The task remains one of closer definition of the connection. Here Haag resorts to Westermann's discussion (1974:90-91) on the significance of the primeval history, to which <sup>the</sup> Yahwist's creation account belongs. The intention of the narrators to take up traditions of

humanity from the beginning, and to adapt and hand them on as belonging to the community of Yahweh, linking these traditions of humanity with Israel's own traditions arising from the confession of Yahweh the saving God, must rather be recognized and assessed theologically as such, for if the narrators of the primeval history only intended to identify the saviour of Israel as also the world creator, they would not need to follow the pre-Israelite language of the pre-determined traditions.<sup>13</sup> Thus Haag argues that the same observations may be applied equally to the creation statements in Deutero-Isaiah, as these ideas of creation also have their origins outside and before Israel. The prophet, by announcing YHWH's acts of salvation against the horizon of the divine creation work, emphasizes in particular 'the universality of the new salvation' (209). Consequently, Haag disagrees with von Rad's thesis that the creation statements are either being absorbed by or serving a subordinate function under Israel's salvation faith.

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<sup>13</sup> Haag has not mentioned what Westermann continues to elaborate, namely, that the narrators' intention to pass on something received prior to their confession of YHWH as Israel's saviour indicates their purpose of linking Israel with her neighbours and all humanity through a shared retrospective view on experiences common to the whole of humankind.

On the other hand, Westermann suggests that the primeval history also looks forward to the history of Israel as the people of YHWH. The linking of the primeval history as a prologue to the history of YHWH acting in Israel results in giving a new life-setting and a new meaning to these adopted traditions. The texts now speak to Israel through the medium of history rather than a direct influence of the primeval time on the present.<sup>14</sup> Thus, according to Haag, Deutero-Isaiah is following the example of the Yahwist in offering through familiar ideas on creation 'a novel connection between the working of Yahweh in creation and history' (210). As a result, Haag also disagrees with Rendtorff's argument that creation faith is identical with salvation faith. On the contrary, both motifs of creation and salvation are rather complementary to each other for a new theological message, the meaning of which Haag moves on to reconstruct in the final part of his essay.

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<sup>14</sup> Again, Haag has not reported what Westermann continues to elaborate, namely, that the cosmic order is not created or renewed in Israel with the cultic recitation of the creation myth, but rather YHWH's action, which Israel has already experienced in its history, is to be extended to the whole realms of human history and universe.

For Haag, the new theological message Deutero-Isaiah proclaims to his own people is indeed a message of redemption (*Erlösungsbotschaft*). The crisis which challenges the prophet to his task is a crisis of faith, hence it calls for a theological response. The people of Israel in exile find themselves once again in slavery and under foreign rule, as if YHWH has cancelled his saving act since Exodus. The whole theology of exile that explains Israel's catastrophe as YHWH's judgement announced long ago resolves only one aspect of the problem. A more gloomy side remains which questions not just the status of Israel as a people of God, but ultimately YHWH himself and his powerful guidance over Israel. There appears no more ground for any belief in a new salvation by YHWH. Here Haag follows Steck (1969) in identifying two theological aspects of the prevailing crisis of the faith in YHWH. In view of the painful experience of the discontinuity of the salvation history, the prophet must emphasize first of all 'the embracing unity of Yahweh in all the diversity of his act' (211). That is precisely how Deutero-Isaiah endeavours to argue that the new salvation proclaimed by him arises from the power of YHWH the creator and lord, a power that has worked since the very beginning of the world. However, there is also the task of connecting the previous saving acts of YHWH with the new salvation but at the same time without ignoring the break signalled by

the judgement between the former and the latter. According to Haag, it is at this particular point that the theological significance of Deutero-Isaiah's creation statements for his redemption message is to be appreciated.

Haag agrees with Elliger (1978:150-151) that even if Deutero-Isaiah is not responsible for introducing the term 'redeem' (לִּשְׁבֹּר) into the religious language of ancient Israel, he must still be the one who has made it, particularly in the participial form, into a central theological idea. The prophet's choice of לִּשְׁבֹּר rather than פָּדָה (to ransom) is seen to be a deliberate one, as the covenantal relationship between YHWH the redeemer and Israel the redeemed apparently constitutes the motivation for the divine act of salvation. Moreover, there is also the significant implication of 'the complete reparation of the disaster' (212), from which it appears that the salvation promise of Israel's redemption is made from the background of the creation traditions, as the prophet sees YHWH's redemption as the creative making up (*die schöpferische Einholung*) for his original election of Israel. The redemption of Israel from slavery to freedom is thus a new creation by YHWH, who not just overcomes the break between the former and the new salvations, but also completes the former acts of deliverance through a new redemption of universal

significance and eschatological quality. Israel's redemption also results in the abolition of the judgement and the return of the people in exile. In this respect YHWH's role as the creator provides both the ground for a new understanding of the life of the redeemed people and the universal horizon for an unrestricted salvation for all humanity. Finally, the redemption event has its objective in the glory of YHWH, which is again expressed through the idea of creation. When the people of Israel testifies out of their experience of liberation to the love of their God for the well being of all humanity, then the world will yearn for such a redemption from YHWH. This 'creative stimulus' (*schöpferischen Impuls*) transmitted from the redeemed to other people in need of salvation will contribute to the manifestation of YHWH's glory as it brings his salvation within grasp of the whole world. Furthermore, the universal revelation of YHWH's royal splendour does not happen only in the creation of the world, for Deutero-Isaiah it is illustrated as well in 'the re-creation of the sinner in history' (213). The glory of YHWH is therefore defined in both the wonderful work of nature and the divine redemption for all humanity.

Haag's critique and development of Albertz's thesis has indeed achieved further insights into the



dual role of YHWH as creator and redeemer as portrayed in Isaiah 40-55.<sup>15</sup> His conclusions have a lot in common with the thinking of both Harner and StuhlmueLLer, although they are reached via a somewhat different route of traditio-historical investigation. It is also worth pointing out that despite his explicit disapproval of the views of either von Rad or Rendtorff, Haag is still convinced that the major theme of this anonymous prophet in exile remains that of redemption, within which the two creation traditions are employed to support its cogency or to highlight its universality.

#### **1.7 Hermisson: Creation and Salvation as Unity**

More recently, Hermisson expresses his view on the unity of creation and salvation within the theology of Deutero-Isaiah in the second half of his

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<sup>15</sup> Consequently, it is disappointing to find Mettinger's discussion (1988:158-174) of the theology of Isaiah 40-55 as still being predominantly controlled by Albertz's idea of two separate creation traditions. Mettinger is ostensibly unaware of Haag's essay, which is not mentioned in his bibliography. For another critique on Albertz from a history-of-religion perspective, see Clifford, who faults Albertz for failing 'to appreciate sufficiently that a peopled universe is the goal and term of creation' (1985:517,n.17; cf. also 1984a and 1984b:59-67).

essay, 'Jakob und Zion, Schöpfung und Heil. Zur Einheit der Theologie Deuterojesajas' (1990). Despite acknowledging that he is a student of von Rad, Hermisson does not agree with his teacher's renowned thesis on the subordinate role of the creation faith. Nor does he accept the view that the prophet had to resort to the argument of creation because YHWH's saving acts in the history of Israel were being invalidated by the catastrophe of the exile. For him both are mistaken in trying to put forward a false alternative within the theology of Deutero-Isaiah. The distinction between creation and salvation may be correct in other parts of the Bible (such as the Priestly writing), but just as in the tradition of the Psalms, the prophet puts his emphasis rather on 'the certainty and experience of Yahweh's ongoing creative activity from the beginning of the world down to the very present moment' (265-266).

As a result, Hermisson argues that the real reason for Deutero-Isaiah to set his proclamation against the background of creation has nothing to do with either a predicament vis-à-vis the exile or a pedagogical purpose relating to the salvation message. Because YHWH has launched out in his worldwide work of salvation, the history of Israel is no longer a sufficient basis for speaking of YHWH's universal lordship, hence a more comprehensive horizon of creation

is required in order to understand this new scope of YHWH's activities. When the prophet refers to YHWH creating the heaven and earth, what he has in mind is neither a once and for all finished event in the very beginning nor the structural details of ancient cosmology, but the universal creative work of YHWH aiming to sustain life (Isa 40:22; 42:5; 45:18). Although sometimes this creative act is affirmed in the context of disputations for the purpose of overcoming Israel's resignation among the world powers, and so the nations are in this respect being considered as opponents to YHWH (Isa 40:15, 17; 44:25f), there are also other instances where these nations are summoned to accept YHWH's rule and to participate in the saving work of the creator (Isa 42:4; 45:7, 18). Thus the universal creation work of YHWH is closely associated with his universal rule and worldwide plan of salvation (266). Similarly, the reference to YHWH's creation of Israel indicates the people's election to be the servant of God with the task of praising the reign and salvation of YHWH (Isa 43:20-21). Furthermore, the new salvation events created by YHWH specifically for his people Israel (such as the transformation of the desert in Isa 43:18-20) also deserve the attention of the entire world. This is especially the case with the Cyrus events, which the prophet describes clearly in Isa 44:24-28 and 46:9-11 as the creative work of YHWH.

Consequently, creation and salvation are a unity in the theology of Deutero-Isaiah.

Most significantly, the prophet describes YHWH as the creator of 'all'. Salvation for Israel includes at the same time defeat for the nations, so both *Heil* and *Unheil* are the work of the one God (Isa 45:7). The hymnic tradition upholds justice and salvation as the effect of the divine creative act, but it means that evil-doers in the world must be eliminated as a result of divine redemption (cf. Ps 104:35; Job 38:12-13). Hermisson thinks that such a conviction actually 'comes from Israel's own experience of disaster (*Unheilserfahrung*)'. The destruction of Jerusalem and the plight of exile are not the work of a different God; 'it is just the grand consequence of the "all"' (267).

The prophetic affirmation of YHWH as the creator of all has a polemical function against the deities of the nations. The creative word of YHWH announced through his prophets and proved efficacious in the catastrophe of 587 B.C.E. plays a central role in Deutero-Isaiah's proclamation. The same effectiveness is to be expected from the calling of Cyrus by YHWH. However, just as the review of the previous work of judgement of YHWH points to the dawning of a new and universal act of salvation by the same God, here in the

Cyrus events one ought to recognize YHWH not only as the sole creator responsible equally for salvation and disaster, but even more as the sole redeemer who has committed himself to the final salvation for the world. According to Hermisson, here lies the irresistible appeal to the nations to turn to YHWH who has proved himself to be the unique creator and redeemer. Such an emphasis can be found in both the prologue (Isa 40:1-11) and the epilogue (Isa 55:8-13) as well as the central core of Isa 44:24-45:23.

## **1.8 Summary**

Our brief survey above indicates that von Rad's renowned thesis on the theological relationship between creation and salvation has in fact been expanded and modified as well as challenged and disputed within the context of Isaiah 40-55. Because of such a diversity in the scholarly discussion, there seems to be yet the need for a closer examination in order to sieve through the various critical data, making room for new findings which may contribute further to the theological enquiry.

The debate concerning creation and redemption in Isaiah 40-55 has been carried out by scholars who are well aware of the importance of form-critical approach in the study of prophetic literature.

Nevertheless, a common feature underlying the discussions reported so far is that only the passages carrying the vocabulary of creation or redemption are being examined, often without reference either to the fuller picture of the respective genre as a whole or to the even larger concern of the arrangement of the prophetic message in these sixteen chapters. Consequently, we propose to explore the interaction between the two theological motifs of creation and redemption in the context of both the major speech-forms of polemics and salvation announcements as well as the overall structure of Isaiah 40-55, but without repeating much of the review of the history of form-critical scholarship on Isaiah 40-55.<sup>16</sup> Although in some passages none of the vocabulary of creation or redemption appears, they are still essential for our understanding of the prophetic concerns, which inevitably has a controlling influence on the nuance and function of the two theological motifs under discussion.

We shall therefore begin in the next three chapters with an examination of the polemical genre, namely, the two groups of disputations on YHWH's sovereignty (chapter 2) and faithfulness (chapter 3), as

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<sup>16</sup> Such reviews may be found in Schoors (1973:1-31), Melugin (1976:13-74), and Merrill (1987:144-156).

well as the trial speeches against the nations and their deities (chapter 4). This will then be followed by further discussion on the salvation oracles (chapter 5) and promises (chapter 7), with an excursus (chapter 6) on the connotations of the Hebrew verb **בָּרָא** (to create), the investigation of which is prompted by its peculiar usage in Isa 54:16. Moreover, we shall also try to pay attention to the macro-structure of Isaiah 40-55, testing the results of our examination of the individual pericopae against the larger horizon of the literary context (chapter 8). Finally in the last chapter, we shall then summarize our conclusions on the relationship between the two motifs of creation and redemption in Isaiah 40-55, and based on our findings, we shall attempt to offer a critical response to the scholarly debate just surveyed, and subsequently endeavour to draw out some significant implications of our research in the studies of both biblical and doctrinal theology.

## CHAPTER 2

### DISPUTATIONS ON YHWH'S SOVEREIGNTY

#### 2.1 Introduction

Despite the fact that a disproportionately large amount of the bibliographical material has been concentrated on the disputation speeches in Isaiah 40-55, there is hardly any scholarly consensus over either the structure or the classification of this particular genre.<sup>1</sup>

On the one hand, von Waldow (1953:28-36) recognizes the frequent irregularities and many variations of the disputation speeches in Deutero-Isaiah, but he still insists that all disputations by this prophet reveal a common formal structure of a

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<sup>1</sup> For a rigorous review of the form-critical debate on the genre of disputation speech (*Disputationswort*) in Isaiah 40-55, see Graffy (1984:6-15).



'basis of disputation' (*Disputationbasis*) followed by a 'final conclusion' (*Schlussfolgerung*).<sup>2</sup> Apparently he has reduced Begrich's (1963:48-53) proposed two basic forms for the disputation speech in Deutero-Isaiah to one.<sup>3</sup> Despite opposition from Westermann and Hermisson, whom we shall discuss in the next paragraph, von Waldow's position is closely followed by Elliger in his unfinished commentary on Isaiah 40:1-45:7, where he applies the twofold structure to Isa 40:12-17, 18-26 (without 19-20), 27-31; and 42:5-9.<sup>4</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>2</sup> Von Waldow includes Isa 40:12-17, 18-20 (+41:6-7), 21-24, 25-26, 27-31; 44:21-22, 24-28; 45:11-13, 18-25; 46:5-11; 48:1-11, 12-15; 51:1-3; and 55:8-13 as disputation speeches.

<sup>3</sup> Begrich differentiates between the first form (to be found in Isa 40:12-17, 18-20, 25-26, 27-31; 45:9-13; 46:5-11), which begins with an initial rhetorical question either introducing the central point of dispute or establishing a basis of agreement and leads into a decisive statement nobody can possibly object to, and the second form (to be found in Isa 44:24-28; 45:18-21; 48:12-15), in which a commonly accepted general statement is followed by a summons to discussion and finally the audience is invited to provide the intended conclusion.

<sup>4</sup> Elliger (1978:44-45, 67-69, 94-95). He considers, however, 44:24-28 as YHWH's address to the heavenly court, though admitting that the passage shows traits of both the salvation oracle and the disputation speech (457-465).

subsequent to his examining in some detail seven disputations pericopae,<sup>5</sup> Schoors concludes that 'the analysis given above points to a genre that is clearly characterized in form and content and whose structure has been exactly grasped by H.E.von Waldow' (1973:295). Furthermore, Naidoff in two different essays (1981a & b) also defends von Waldow's proposed structure with only minor adjustments in Isa 40:12-31 and 45:9-13.

On the other hand, Westermann (1964b:124-127) prefers to talk about the *Redeform* of the disputation, as, contrary to von Waldow, he questions the existence of the genre of disputation speeches for the lack of a clear common structure. Moreover, he argues on the basis of Isa 40:12-31 that disputations in Deutero-Isaiah are no longer oral speeches but integral parts of extended literary compositions. He also suggests calling this speech-form *Bestreitung*, since the opponent's view is often reported and not quoted by the prophet. Likewise, Hermisson (1971) prefers to speak of *Diskussionswort*, because there is no such genre as 'disputation speech' in Deutero-Isaiah. After examining closely Isa 40:12-17, 27-31; and 44:24-28, he concludes that von Waldow's bipartite structure simply does not

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<sup>5</sup> They are Isa 40:12-31; 44:24-28; 45:9-13; 46:5-13; 48:1-11, 12-16; and 55:8-13.

exist. On the contrary, only a common purpose or function of confronting the audience can be found, with recurring stylistic devices like quotations or rhetorical questions in order to convince the people of the prophetic message of salvation. Melugin (1976:28-44) too finds von Waldow's schema inadequate as a description of the structure of a genre, as more than one speech-form is evident among the disputations of Deutero-Isaiah.

Without coming down in favour of either side, Graffy (1984:2-5 & 22-23) ardently maintains that the genuine disputation speeches with the quotation-refutation pattern as described by Gunkel must be distinguished from those which betray no clear disagreement and hence do not merit the name of the genre. He also urges that other prophetic texts outside Deutero-Isaiah be included in a proper form-critical study, so that precision may be given to the designation of disputation speeches, 'where an opinion of the speakers is explicitly reported by the prophet and refuted by him' (23). As a result, only Isa 40:27-31 and 49:14-25 qualify as full members of the genre. However, Graffy also mentions Merendino's study on Isaiah 40-48 (1981), in which the disputation speeches are defined not according to the formal structure but by the content

of the texts which demonstrate YHWH's power in history.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly enough, Dijkstra (1980:437), whose dissertation has apparently escaped Graffy's notice, also suggests that within the group of texts in Second Isaiah classified as disputes, the only distinction to be made is not that of disputations and trial speeches, but rather between those which deal with Israel's failure in the past and those which focus on YHWH's uniqueness and power. Thus it is possible that, despite the absence of a distinctive formal structure, disputations in Isaiah 40-55 may still be identified through their common style and subject of argument.

It is therefore our intention within this chapter to examine six passages which, as we shall demonstrate, share the common theme of YHWH's sovereignty as well as exhibit the same features of being engaged in a theological controversy. We shall begin with Isa 40:27-31, which is recognized to be a proper disputational pericope even under the most stringent criteria required by Graffy (1984:86-91).

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<sup>6</sup> Merendino (1981:118, 128, and 251) thus includes Isa 40:27-31; 41:1-4; and 42:5-9 under the genre of *Bestreitung*. As Graffy points out, Merendino does not discuss the question of structure of the genre at all.

וַתִּדְבֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וּמֵאַלְהֵי מִשְׁפָּטֵי יַעֲבֹד:

<sup>27</sup> לָמָּה תֹאמַר יַעֲקֹב  
נִסְתָּרָה דְרָכֵי מִדְּהָרָה

אִם-לֹא שָׁמַעַתָּ  
בּוֹרְאָ קְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ  
אֵין חֶקֶר לְחַבּוּנָתוֹ:  
וְלֹאִין אֱוִיִּים עֲצָמָה יִרְבֶּה:

<sup>28</sup> הֲלוֹא יָדַעַתָּ  
אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם יְהוָה  
לֹא יִיָּעַף וְלֹא יִיָּבֶע  
<sup>29</sup> נָחַן לִיָּעַף כִּחַ

וּבַחֲזִירִים כָּשׂוּל יִכְשֹׁלוּ:  
יַעֲלוּ אֲבָר כִּנְשָׁרִים  
וְלִכּוּ וְלֹא יִיָּעֲבוּ:

<sup>30</sup> יִיָּעֲבוּ גְעָרִים יִיָּבֶעוּ  
<sup>31</sup> יִקְוִי יְהוָה בְּחִלְיוֹ כִּחַ  
יִרוּצוּ וְלֹא יִיָּבֶעוּ

<sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob,

And why do you speak, O Israel:

My way is hidden from YHWH,

And from my God my judgement passes away?

<sup>28</sup> Have you not known?

Or have you not heard?

YHWH is God of perpetuity,

Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not faint, nor will he grow weary,

There is no probing of his understanding;

<sup>29</sup> Giving power to the fainting,

And to one without strength he multiplies vigour.

<sup>30</sup> And youths will faint and grow weary;

And young men will utterly collapse.

<sup>31</sup> But those waiting for YHWH will renew power,

They will raise<sup>7</sup> pinion like the eagles;

They will run but not faint,

They will walk but not grow weary.

The pericope clearly consists of three sections. It begins with an introduction (v.27a) and a direct quotation of the complaint (v.27b), and is followed by the refutation, which comes in two consecutive parts. The first half of the refutation (vv.28-29) presents YHWH as a God of sovereign power, while the second half (vv.30-31) draws out the contrast not only between those who appear to have power (namely, the 'youths' and the 'young men' of v.30) and those who possess genuine power (because they are 'those waiting for YHWH', v.31aa), but also between divine and human power: v.30 is obviously in opposition to v.28, while v.31 delineates the consequence of v.29. The key words

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<sup>7</sup> Levy (1925:128) rightly comments that the renowned rendering of 'they shall mount up with wings' cannot be sustained 'without doing violence to the grammar'. Hence יַעֲלֶיךָ should be understood as *Hiphil* instead of *Qal*; both forms are identical because of the guttural *Y*.

are undoubtedly  $\text{פָּנָה}$  (to faint) and  $\text{יָאֵזַב}$  (to grow weary), which together are repeated thrice<sup>8</sup>, and therefore the key statement of the refutation must be: 'He will not faint, nor will he grow weary' (v.28a $\beta$ ).<sup>9</sup> YHWH is far from being a 'fainting' God who cannot see the way of his own people, nor has he 'grown weary' that he will let their judgement pass away from him. On the contrary, he is in fact the one who is sovereign, and his power is so abundant that he is able to give strength and vigour to those waiting for him.

Consequently, it seems inaccurate for commentators like Whybray to suggest that here 'the prophet is no longer concerned with God's ability to help his people but with a complaint that he is unwilling to do so' (1975:58). The complaint of v.27b only alleges that the people's plight has been neglected

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<sup>8</sup> YHWH 'will not faint nor grow weary' (v.28a $\beta$ ), moreover, he empowers those who 'faint and grow weary' (v.30a), so that those waiting for him 'will not faint nor grow weary' (v.31b).

<sup>9</sup> *Pace* Westermann (1966:51), who considers v.28 but 'a summary repetition of the answers of the previous sections', and only v.29 as the 'final answer'. There is, however, no mentioning of the motif of fainting or growing weary in the previous texts of vv.12-26; nor is v.29 an independent sentence able to serve as the climax of the refutation.

by YHWH; whether it is because of his lack of power or because he is unwilling to help remains open. Nevertheless, as we have observed, the refutation clearly focuses on YHWH's power and not on his willingness: v.29 expresses the abundance of divine power, while v.31 encourages the people to continue waiting for YHWH. It is therefore reasonable to argue backward from the response that the original complaint must be about YHWH's inability instead of his unwillingness to help.

If the issue at dispute is recognized to be the sovereignty of YHWH, then the affirmation of YHWH as 'God of perpetuity' and 'creator of the ends of the earth' (v.28aa) must also point to this motif of divine power. Because the nuances of the sovereignty of YHWH as creator have already been fully explored in the preceding passage (vv.12-26), there is no need of further elaboration for the two divine epithets here. Hence while it is correct to affirm that Isa 40:27-31 is a complete disputation speech containing both a quotation and a refutation, we must not ignore the strong indications of its continuity with and affinity to the passage preceding it.

Before we turn to Isa 40:12-26, there is one further point to be noted. Whereas the motif of YHWH as



creator plays a dominant role within this disputation, none of the salvation words appear in it. It is very doubtful if the pericope actually 'ends in a proclamation of salvation' (Schoors 1973:259), for the theme remains YHWH's sovereign power throughout the entire speech. Moreover, we should not immediately jump to the conclusion that here the disputation must serve the purpose of defending the prophet's announcement of salvation against doubts and sarcasm, and hence the mentioning of creation is there to guarantee YHWH's saving ability amidst the hopeless situation of the exile. What appears to be certain is that the prophet argues for YHWH's supreme power and absolute sovereignty, and one principal way of expressing such a conviction is by referring to his identity as creator.

### 2.3 Isaiah 40:12-26

וְשָׁמַיִם בְּזֵרָתָהּ תִּכְנֶן	<sup>12</sup> מִי־מִדָּד בְּשֹׁעָלוֹ מַיִם
וְכָל בְּשָׁלֵשׁ עֶפֶר הָאָרֶץ	
וְגִבְעוֹת בְּמֵאזְגָרִים:	וְשָׁקֵל בְּפָלֶס תָּדִירִים
וְאִישׁ עֲצָתוֹ יוֹדִיעֶנּוּ:	<sup>13</sup> מִי־תִכְנֶן אֶת־רֹרֶת יְהוָה
וְיִלְמְדֵהוּ בְּאַרְחַת מִשְׁפָּט	<sup>14</sup> אֶת־מִי בּוֹעֵץ נִיבִיגְדֵהוּ
וְדַרְכֵי תְבוּנוֹת יוֹדִיעֶנּוּ:	וְיִלְמְדֵהוּ דַעַת
וְכִשְׁתֵּק מֵאֲזָגִים גְּחֹשְׁבוֹ	<sup>15</sup> הֲנָּהּ גּוֹיִם כְּמֶר מִדְּלִי
<sup>16</sup> וְיִלְבְּגוּן אֵין דִּי בְּעִיר	הֲנָּהּ אֲזִיִּים כְּדֶק וְטוֹל:
וְתִתֵּנוּ אֵין דִּי עוֹלָה:	

מֵאֲפֶס יָתָחוּ בְחֶשְׁבוֹ-לוֹ:

<sup>17</sup>כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם כְּאֶזֶן בְּגִדָּו

וּמִה-דְּמוּת תַּעֲרֹכוּ לוֹ:

<sup>18</sup>וְאֵל-מִי תִדְמִיּוּן אֵל

וְצִרְף בְּזָהָב יִרְקָעֵנּוּ

<sup>19</sup>הַפֶּסֶל גִּסְדֵּי חֶרֶשׁ

וְרִתְקוֹת בָּסֶף צוֹרֶף:

חֶרֶשׁ חָכֵם יִבְקֹשׁ-לוֹ

<sup>20</sup>תִּמְסַכֵּן תִּרְוַמָּה עֵץ לֹא-יִרְקַב וּבָחַר

לְהַכִּין פֶּסֶל לֹא יָמוּט:

תִּלְוֹא תִכְיַנְתֶּם מוֹסְדוֹת דָּאָרֶץ:

וְיִשְׁכִּיף בְּחִגְבִּים

וַיִּמָּתְחֶם כְּאַתֵּל לְשָׁבֹת:

שֹׁפְטֵי אֶרֶץ כִּתְחוּ עֲשֵׂה:

אֵף כָּל-שֹׁרֵשׁ בְּאֶרֶץ גִּזְעִם

וּסְעָרָה בִּקְשׁ תִּשְׁאֵם:

יֹאמֶר קְדוֹשׁ:

וַיֵּרֹא מִי-בָרָא אֱלֹהִי

לְכֹלֵם בְּשֵׁם יִקְרָא

אִישׁ לֹא בְעֶדְרִי:

<sup>21</sup>תִּלְוֹא תִדְעוּ תִלְוֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ

תִּלְוֹא תִגְדֵּי מִרְאֵשׁ לָכֶם

<sup>22</sup>תִּיָּשֶׁב עַל-חֹיג דָּאָרֶץ

הַבּוֹטָה בְּדֹק שָׁמַיִם

<sup>23</sup>תִּבּוֹתֶן רוֹזְנִים לְאֶזֶן

<sup>24</sup>אֵף כָּל-נִטְעוּ אֵף כָּל-זֶרְעוּ

וְגַם-נִשְׁרֵי בָהֶם וַיִּבְשׁוּ

<sup>25</sup>וְאֵל-מִי תִדְמִיּוּנִי וְאִשְׁנָה

<sup>26</sup>שְׂאוּ-מָרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם

תִּמּוֹצִיא בְּמִסְפָּר צָבָאִם

מִרְבֹּ אֲוִנִים וְאִמּוּן כֹּחַ

<sup>12</sup>Who has measured waters with his palm,

And has assessed heavens with the span,

And gauged the earth's dust with the bushel?

And weighed mountains with the balance,

And hills with a pair of scales?

<sup>13</sup>Who has assessed the spirit of YHWH,

- And what man has made him know his counsel?<sup>10</sup>
- <sup>14</sup> Whom has he consulted and who has made him understand,  
 And has taught him in a path of judgement?  
 And has taught him knowledge,  
 And has made him know a way of understandings?
- <sup>15</sup> Look! Nations are like a drop from a bucket,  
 And reckoned as powder on scales.  
 Look! He lifts up coastlands like the fine dust,  
<sup>16</sup> And Lebanon is not enough for burning,  
 And its beasts are not enough for offering.
- <sup>17</sup> All the nations are like nothing in his sight,  
 Reckoned by him as less than nil and chaos.
- <sup>18</sup> And to whom will you liken El?  
 And what likeness will you juxtapose with him?

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<sup>10</sup> As 𐤅, 𐤆, and 𐤇 all repeat the interrogative pronoun 'who', *BHS* suggests an emendation of 𐤅 𐤁𐤏𐤔 to replace 𐤅 𐤁𐤏𐤔. But Dahood (1973) is probably correct in pointing back to the beginning of the verse, where 𐤁𐤏𐤔 serves as a double-duty interrogative pronoun covering the second half of the verse as well. He further notes the chiastic structure of the parallel cola, taking 𐤅 𐤁𐤏𐤔 as the direct object of the verb 𐤏𐤏𐤏. This double-accusative construction recurs in v.14b $\beta$ . Consequently, Dahood is of the opinion that Whybray's quest for the 'heavenly counsellor' (1971) addresses a false problem, as the questions in Isa 40:13-14 are only rhetorical.

<sup>19</sup> Is it<sup>11</sup> an idol a craftsman has cast,  
 And a smith overlaid it with gold,  
 And moulding chains<sup>12</sup> of silver?  
<sup>20</sup> Is it a sissoo<sup>13</sup> of tribute [ ]<sup>14</sup> he chooses,

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<sup>11</sup> Mettinger (1974:79) is probably correct to suggest that the beginning ׀ of both vv.19 and 20 should be taken as the interrogative particle, following ׀, ׀, and ׀ but *pace* ׀.

<sup>12</sup> Mettinger's (1974:80) proposed meaning of ׀, a *hapax legomenon*, 'plates' on the basis of Mishnaic Hebrew, has been rightly criticized by Williamson (1986:15-16), who prefers the traditional view, 'chains' as supported by ׀, and suggests that the phrase, though remaining uncertain as to details, implies a sarcastic reference to the idol's immovability, hence both vv.19 and 20 end in parallel.

<sup>13</sup> Millard and Snook (1964) argue against rendering ׀ 'the poor man', for 'none of the ancient translations understood any reference to poverty'. On the contrary, ׀ and Jerome both understand it to denote 'a kind of hard wood used for making images', and these hints are apparently supported by some Assyrian inscriptions mentioning 'a wood *musukkannu* as an item of tribute'. Applying the discussion of *musukkannu* by Gershevitch (1957) to Isa 40:20, Millard and Snook think that 'a strong case has been made for identification with the sissoo, a tree with very hard wood now found in western Persia'.

<sup>14</sup> The parallelism between vv.19 and 20 suggests that each comprises three stichs, and that the first stich of v.20 is obviously overloaded. Here we follow the

[a tree that does not rot]

A wise craftsman he seeks for it,

To set up an idol which will not be shaken?

<sup>21</sup>Do you not know? Do you not hear?

Has it not been declared from beginning to you?

Have you not noted from<sup>15</sup> the earth's foundations?

<sup>22</sup>The one sitting above the circle of the earth,

(And those sitting<sup>16</sup> in it are like locusts);

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conclusion of Williamson (1986), who proposes that 'it is rather the phrase עֵץ לֹא-יִרָקָב which should be regarded as a gloss on the opening words of the verse' (16-17), and that the gloss is added because of 'an early awareness that the meaning of what is no more than the transliteration of a foreign word might easily be forgotten' (19). Fitzgerald (1989) argues that here the verses describe how a metal statue is manufactured and set on a wooden base, but he can only 'presume that the context cries out for a word meaning "base" or "platform"' (442).

<sup>15</sup> We consider the מִן of מִרְאשׁ a double-duty preposition covering מִן־סִדּוֹת as well.

<sup>16</sup> The three occurrences of the verb יָשָׁב in v.22 should be translated consistently as 'to sit'. While the first יָשָׁב (v.22aα) clearly depicts YHWH as sitting enthroned above the earth, the second יֹשְׁבֵיהָ (v.22aβ) in context is more likely referring to the earthly rulers who 'sit' rather than the inhabitants who 'dwell' in it. The final לָשָׁבַת (v.22bβ) is usually understood as 'to dwell (in a tent)', yet if כְּאֶהֱל refers not to any tent

The one stretching out heavens like the veil,  
 And unfolded them like the tabernacle to sit;  
<sup>23</sup>The one turning rulers to nothing;  
 Earth's judges he made like chaos.  
<sup>24</sup>Hardly were they planted,  
 Hardly were they sown,  
 Hardly was their stem rooted in the earth;  
 And he had also blown upon them, and they withered,  
 And a tempest would carry them like the chaff.  
<sup>25</sup>And to whom will you liken me that I may resemble?  
 Says the Holy One.  
<sup>26</sup>Lift up on high your eyes,  
 And see who has created these!  
 The one bringing out their hosts according to number,  
 All of whom he calls by name;  
 Because of abundant strength and mighty power,  
 Not one is missing.

Form-critical opinions differ widely and produce little agreement over the composition of the passage.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible to straighten out

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but to the tent, i.e., the tabernacle, then לְשֹׁכֵת may in fact point to the ark as the throne of YHWH inside the tabernacle.

<sup>17</sup> See in particular the summaries of Melugin (1971)

one or two issues before we discuss its structure and theme. First of all, Clifford is correct to insist that '[t]he vivid portrayal of the idol-making in vv.17[sic 19?]-20 is not. . .intrusive but rather intrinsic to the contrast between Yahweh and the idols and kings' (1980:460).<sup>18</sup> We agree, however, with Graffy that Clifford's 'division of the text into vv.12-17. 18-24. 25-31 completely disregards the fundamental importance of the quotation in v.27' (1984:87,n.143). Secondly, Schoors (1973:259) is probably right in identifying a parallel structure between vv.17-20 and vv.21-26.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, it not only strengthens the inclusion of vv.19-20, but also argues against the division of text between vv.17 and 18.<sup>20</sup>

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and Naidoff (1981b).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the more detailed argument in Spykerboer (1976: 30-58).

<sup>19</sup> Schoors observes a 'perfect chiastic parallelism' in vv.12-26:

I.A.	a.	The great creating God (vv.12-14)
	b.	<u>Thus</u> NATIONS are nothing (vv.15-17)
B.	b'.	To whom liken God? (v.18)
	a'.	<u>For</u> the IDOLS are nothing (vv.19-20)
II.A.	a.	The great creating God (vv.21-22)
	b.	<u>Thus</u> he makes PRINCES as nothing (vv.23-24)
B.	b'.	To whom liken God? (v.25)
	a'.	<u>For</u> he has created the STAR-GODS (v.26)

<sup>20</sup> Elliger's proposed threefold structure

In our opinion, the passage Isa 40:12-26 falls naturally into four parts: vv.12-17, 18-20, 21-24, and 25-26. As Schoors points out, vv.12-17 and 21-24 are parallel to one another, each beginning with the affirmation of YHWH's sovereignty over both the universe and human history, and subsequently moving on to dismiss the nations and their rulers as 'nothing' and 'chaos'. Since vv.22 and 23 are closely joined together by a series of three participles with the article, we think it is artificial for Schoors to divide vv.21-22 from vv.23-24. Likewise, vv.12-14 must not be separated from vv.15-17 either, for the evaluation of the nations (v.15) is part of the extended metaphor of weighing the universe (v.12). On the other hand, the parallel rhetorical questions in vv.18 and 25 should also be linked with the following elaborations of YHWH's incomparability. As a result, although we agree with Schoors in seeing a parallel structure between vv.12-20 and 21-26, we do not go along with him in dividing each passage into four parts, and we do not see any chiasm within each structure.

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(1978:42-44) each consisting of five poetic stichs for vv.12-17 depends on eliminating three stichs, which is one-sixth of the given text.



In these four parts YHWH is set against four possible competitors for absolute sovereignty and supreme power: namely, the nations, the idols, the rulers, and the heavenly hosts. Although no direct quotation is reported throughout the text, we may still detect the need to argue with various rhetorical devices in order for the prophet to dispel the heavy sense of fear and doubt among his audience. We therefore tend to agree with Elliger (1978:44-47, 63-69; *pace* Westermann 1964b:127-132, 1966:42-53) that here we are confronted by a different type of disputation which does not operate with a quotation and a corresponding refutation. On the contrary, the prophet achieves his goal by carefully substantiating his own arguments as well as invalidating the opposite views in order to arrive at a conclusion which his audience is unable to reject.

It is also clear that here the prophet is not arguing from creation to salvation, but as Albertz (1974:8-9) shows, the two motifs of YHWH's power over the universe and human history stand together in support of his unique claim to absolute sovereignty, just as they do in the context of the descriptive praises of the Psalter. The theme of the disputation is neither creation nor redemption, but remains YHWH's incomparability. Consequently, we may regard vv.18 and 25 as the climax of the arguments, and hence consider

vv.12-20 and 21-26 to be two separate pericopae complete in themselves but closely parallel to each other and linked thematically with vv.27-31.

#### 2.4 Isaiah 44:24-28

וְיִצְרֶנּוּ מִבֶּטֶן	<sup>24</sup> כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה גֹּאֲלֶךָ
נָטָה שְׁמִי לְבָרִי רָקַע הָאָרֶץ מִי אֲחִיר:	אֲנִכִּי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָל
וְקִסְמִים יְהוֹלִל וְנִעְתָם יִשְׁכַּל:	<sup>25</sup> מִפֶּר אֲתוֹת בְּדִים מִשִּׁיב תַּכְמִּים אֲחִיר
וְנִעַצַת מִלְאָכָיו יִשְׁלִים	<sup>26</sup> מִקִּים דְּבַר עֲבָדָיו
וְלִעֲרִי יְהוּדָה תִּבְגֵּינָה וְתִרְבּוּתֶיהָ אֶקְוֶמָם:	הָאֵמַר לִירוּשָׁלַם תּוֹשָׁב
וְנִתְּתֶנּוּ אוֹכִישׁ:	<sup>27</sup> הָאֵמַר לְצוּלָה תִּרְכִּי
וְכָל-תַּפְצְצֵי יִשְׁלִים וְהִיכָל תִּסְדֹּד:	<sup>28</sup> הָאֵמַר לְכוֹרֶשׁ רַעִי וְלֵאמֹר לִירוּשָׁלַם תִּבְגֵּה

<sup>24</sup> Thus said YHWH your redeemer,  
And your shaper from womb:

I am YHWH, making everything,  
Stretching out heavens on my own,

Spreading out the land, who is with me?<sup>21</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Frustrating signs of praters -

And diviners he makes fool of;

Turning the wise people back -

And their knowledge he makes 'smart';<sup>22</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Establishing the word of his servant -

And the plan of his messengers he accomplishes.

The one saying to Jerusalem: You will be inhabited,<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Following the traditional spelling (*Ketiv*) מִי אֶתִי, which is supported by מִיָּא אֶתִי of  $\mathfrak{Q}^a$ , τις ἕτερος of  $\mathfrak{S}$ , τις σου ἔμοι of *A*, et nullus mecum of  $\mathfrak{B}$ , and 31 Hebrew Mss. On the other hand, the traditional reading (*Qere*) מִיָּאִי is also supported by בְּגִבּוֹרָתִי of  $\mathfrak{Z}$  and מִנִּי וְלִי of  $\mathfrak{C}$ . On the ground of semantic parallelism, the *Ketiv* is apparently the more difficult reading.

<sup>22</sup> Both  $\mathfrak{Q}^a$  and  $\mathfrak{Q}^b$  have יִסְכֵּל (makes foolish), and so do  $\mathfrak{S}$ ,  $\mathfrak{C}$ ,  $\mathfrak{Z}$ , and  $\mathfrak{B}$ . Elliger (1978:454) notes that 'the  $\mathfrak{W}$  in  $\mathfrak{M}$  is just an abnormal spelling'. However, it seems preposterous not to notice that the two words sound almost identical but express opposite meanings. Watts (1987:151) is therefore apt to suggest that here 'is a solid example of double meaning, or tongue-in-cheek sarcasm, which is difficult to translate'.

<sup>23</sup>  $\mathfrak{M}$ 's תִּשָּׁב *Hophal* occurs only here, Isa 5:8 and Ezek 35:9. However,  $\mathfrak{Q}^a$  and  $\mathfrak{Q}^b$  both read תִּשָּׁב *Qal*, meaning probably not 'she will dwell' (pace Watts 1987:152, n.26c) but rather 'you shall sit'. Our translation follows  $\mathfrak{M}$ , but the variant of  $\mathfrak{Q}^{a,b}$  remains a very

And to the cities of Judah: You will be built,

And her ruins I shall raise up.

<sup>27</sup>The one saying to the deep: Be dry!

And your floods I shall drain.

<sup>28</sup>The one saying to Cyrus: My shepherd!

And all my delight he will accomplish.

And saying to Jerusalem: You will be built,

And to the temple: You will be founded.

The messenger formula which begins this passage together with the change of addressee from Israel to Cyrus in 45:1 confirm that Isa 44:24-28 is a self-contained pericope. Westermann's objection that this cannot be an independent unit 'since no more follows the noun clause "I am Yahweh" than an unbroken series of participles' (1966:125) has been nicely countered by Melugin, who points out that in Ps 103:3-7 there is also a series of participial clauses which 'are not subordinate grammatically to what follows; they stand on their own as independent affirmations' (1976:39). Moreover, Melugin suggests 'that Deutero-Isaiah's use of the messenger formula here is an indication that the following clauses in hymn style are employed for purposes other than praise' (38).

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attractive alternative.

The structure of the pericope is indeed obvious. After the messenger formula, there are altogether three consecutive groups of participial clauses, each group containing respectively three participles. While the first group of participles (v.24b) refers to YHWH's unique sovereignty as the sole creator, the second group (vv.25-26a) describes his supreme control over human history. The third group (vv.26b-28) is clearly distinguished from the previous two by the presence of the definite article before its thrice repeated participle אֵלֶּךָ. It is apparent that the prophet is trying to argue that YHWH, who is well recognized to be the sovereign lord over creation and history, is also the one who now makes the following announcements. Von Waldow's insistence upon only one common form of disputation speech in Isaiah 40-55 has been rightly criticized by many; but his proposal that the prophetic disputation argues from the *Disputations-basis*, upon which both the prophet and his audience may agree, to the *Schlussfolgerung*, which is the logical result of the argument based on the point of common agreement, appears to be applicable at least in this one case. The first two sections reflect generally accepted knowledge of YHWH's authority and power, and the last section draws out the conclusion of the disputation. The disputational intention and function of the pericope

cannot be denied.

The three announcements of the last group of participial clauses include the rehabilitation of Jerusalem, the drying of the deep, and Cyrus accomplishing YHWH's delight. Thus the point of disputation seems to be whether YHWH is able to end the exile for his people Israel by taking full control over a pagan king rather than why he has chosen a pagan king to execute his will. Again the issue is one of sovereignty and power. The prophet begins from the fact that YHWH is well recognized in the hymns as the sole creator of the universe and the supreme authority in control of human history. We must hasten to make clear that here the emphasis is not upon YHWH's ability to forecast future events, but rather his divine power to accomplish his own will. There is indeed a nice parallel between YHWH 'accomplishing' what his messenger announces (v.26a) and Cyrus 'accomplishing' YHWH's delight (v.28a); both are illustrations of power and not of the irrelevant subject of prediction. The conclusion is not about the academic question of whether YHWH can foresee the final outcomes of his people in exile, but the life and death issue of whether he is powerful enough to command Cyrus, in whose hand the future of Jerusalem and Judah apparently lies, to bring the exile of Israel to a final end.

Finally, the meaning of v.27 remains to be explored. If it was an allusion to YHWH's first act of creation, then perhaps it would be more at home with the first part of the disputation where YHWH declares his sovereign power over creation. Schoors (1973:272-273) insists that while representing 'Yahwe's salvific intervention', the verse 'is reminiscent of the Exodus, more particularly of the passage through the Reed Sea'. In his view, the linkage between v.27 and the Exodus may be established through the verbal connection between צִוְלָה, which is a *hapax legomenon* in v.27a, and the synonym מְצוּלָה, which is found in Exod 15:5 and Neh 9:11 and in both cases designating the Reed Sea. Moreover, the words חֲרָבָה (dry land) and יַבְשָׁה (dry ground), which share the same two roots חרב (to be dry) and יבש (to drain) here in v.27, are also used in the narrative of the crossing of the Sea in Exod 14:21-22. However, Gunn (1975:497-499) argues that if 'the allusion in the present passage is intended to be primarily to the Reed Sea it is difficult to see why the key term יָם is not used instead of a rare word which does not itself have any special place in this particular tradition'. On the other hand, 'a consideration of the particular vocabulary here (חרב, יבש) suggests a possible hierarchy of connotations': whereas both verbs are used twice each in the flood story (Gen 8:7,13,14), neither one appears

in the pentateuchal Reed-Sea traditions. Furthermore, the parallelism clarifies that 'your floods' must refer to the floods of the deep, a notion 'closely paralleled in the phrase "fountains of the deep" in the flood story in Gen 7:11 and 8:2'. Consequently, Gunn is of the opinion that the verse alludes to both creation and the flood but less clearly to the Exodus. If we take into consideration his beginning statements at the start of his essay, where he rightly points out 'that Deutero-Isaiah saw the exile and the imminent deliverance as being essentially of the same order as the events of the flood and what followed' (494),<sup>24</sup> then the meaning of v.27 is consistent with its immediate context. On the one hand, there is this unmistakable affirmation of re-establishing order out of chaos, and here the ending of the flood is parallel to the ending of the exile. On the other hand, there is also the mythical allusion to YHWH grappling with the hostile forces, which must be brought under his sovereign control before the restoration of Jerusalem. Thus when the prophet expands the messenger formula by introducing YHWH as 'your redeemer / and your shaper from womb' (v.24a), he is concerned with both motifs of redemption

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<sup>24</sup> Gunn refers to Isa 44:27; 50:2; 51:10; 54:9-10; and 55:10-13 as the prophet's poetic allusions to the flood imagery.



and creation under the predominant theme of the sovereignty of YHWH.

## 2.5 Isaiah 45:9-13

תָּרַשׁ אֶת-תְּרֹשֵׁי אֲדָמָה	הוֹי רָב אֶת-יִצְרוֹ <sup>09</sup>
וּפָעַלָהּ אֵין-יָדָיִם לֹא:	הִיא־אָמַר חֲמֹר לִי־צִרוֹ מִהַ-תַּעֲשֶׂה
וּלְאִשָּׁה מִהַ-תְּחַלֵּין:	הוֹי אָמַר לְאָב מִהַ-תְּוֹלִיד <sup>10</sup>
קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹצְרוֹ	כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה <sup>11</sup>
וְעַל-פְּעַל יָדֵי תַצְוֶנִי:	הָאֲתִיּוֹת שְׂאֵלֹנִי עַל-פָּנַי
וְאָדָם עָלֶיךָ בְּרָאֲתִי	אֲנֹכִי עָשִׂיתִי אֶרֶץ <sup>12</sup>
וְכָל-צִבְאָם צִוִּיתִי:	אֲנִי יָדִי בְטוֹ שָׁמַיִם
וְכָל-דֹּרְכָיו אֲנִישׁ	אֲנֹכִי תַעֲרִיתָהוּ בְצֶדֶק <sup>13</sup>
וּגְלוֹתַי יִשְׁלַח	הוּא-יִבְנֶה עִירִי
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:	לֹא בְמִתְּוִיר וְלֹא בְשֹׁמֵד

<sup>09</sup>Woe to anyone contending with his shaper,

A potsherd with earthen potsherds!

Will clay say to its shaper: What do you make?

And your work: It has no hands?

<sup>10</sup>Woe to anyone saying to a father: What do you beget?

And to a woman: What do you deliver?

<sup>11</sup>Thus said YHWH,

The Holy One of Israel and his shaper:

The coming things - ask me!<sup>25</sup> About my sons,  
 And about my hands' work will you command me?  
<sup>12</sup>It is I who made earth,  
 And humanity upon it I created.  
 It is my hands which stretched out heavens,  
 And all their host I commanded.  
<sup>13</sup>It is I who roused him up in victory,  
 And all his ways I shall make straight.  
 It is he who will build my city,  
 And my exile he will set free;  
 Not for a price and not for a bribe,  
 Said YHWH of hosts.

Commentators usually agree that this pericope is YHWH's response to those among his own people in exile who are unable to accept the pagan king Cyrus as YHWH's anointed. Indeed this is a very reasonable and tempting assumption, but we must point

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<sup>25</sup> The emendation of דְּאֵתִיוֹת שְׁאֵלֹנִי into דְּאֵתִי תְּשְׁאֵלֹנִי, which is proposed by Driver (1933:39) and well defended by Skehan (1960:54), is an obvious improvement on מ. Unfortunately it is not supported by any ancient versions. North (1964:153), Schoors (1973:264), and Hermisson (1987:10) all admit that מ is not meaningless after all. Thus the two contemporary Jewish commentators, Levy (1925:189) and Slotki (1949:222), both follow מ, though NJPS apparently changes שְׁאֵלֹנִי to תְּשְׁאֵלֹנִי, perhaps on the ground of haplography.

out that among the texts referring to Cyrus, there is no clear indication of such a discontent among the audience of the prophet. Isa 41:1-7 and 21-29 both discuss YHWH's stirring up Cyrus, but these two passages are rightly considered as trial speeches directed against the nations and their deities, with the purpose of showing YHWH as the only supreme God reigning over human history. Isa 45:1-8, and perhaps 42:1-9 as well, are direct addresses from YHWH to Cyrus, yet again no hint whatsoever of Israel's objection to YHWH's decision may be found. Isa 46:8-13 is the only speech of exhortation (*Mahnwort*)<sup>26</sup> which is clearly addressed to Israel and mentions implicitly Cyrus (v.11) as YHWH's agent. Nevertheless, we do not find any trace of argument over whether Cyrus is an acceptable choice, only an affirmation of YHWH's sovereignty to announce and accomplish salvation through this powerful monarch. The only passage<sup>27</sup> remaining is Isa 45:9-13; if indeed it implies a sense of protest and criticism against YHWH's working through Cyrus, it is still unique, as the same negative response is not to be found elsewhere in Isaiah 40-55. Leene is probably very much to the point when he

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<sup>26</sup> For the delimitation of text and determination of genre, see Hermisson (1991:125-129).

<sup>27</sup> We do not think Isa 48:12-16 is about Cyrus at all. See our discussion in chapter three.

half-jokingly remarks 'that the paganism of Cyrus occasions more brain-racking for some modern exegetes than it did for Second Isaiah and his contemporaries' (1974:320).

Westermann (1966:134-135), following the suggestion of Elliger (1933:180-183), sees Isa 45:11-13 as originally YHWH's argument in refutation of the nations' question about his treatment of Israel. Subsequently, the addition of vv.9-10 reshapes the entire passage into a disputation countering the objections to the Cyrus oracle. But Koole (1974:173) is certainly correct in observing that an objection to YHWH's choice of Cyrus must be more plausible in the exilic situation than in the post-exilic period, when the return of the exiles under Cyrus is already an accomplished fact. Hermisson (1987:11-16), while arguing that vv.9-10, 11b, and 13b are late additions to an original prophetic proclamation on Cyrus (vv.11a+12-13a), disagrees with the current consensus that the final pericope is a disputation at all. He questions whether the woe-cries are an appropriate beginning of a discussion, and proposes instead that the supplement is a warning to the nations not to revolt against their destiny under Cyrus. However, his view depends heavily on the assumption that the pericope cannot be considered as a unity. While textual difficulties are insufficient

indicators and stylistic differences are subjective criteria for disunity, the messenger formula in vv.11a does not always necessarily denote an original beginning, as Hermisson himself recognizes too that there are quite a few exceptions (14). Moreover, the verbal connections between vv.9-10 and 11-13 as surveyed by Leene (1974:317) are definitely not just confined to vv.9-10 and 11b.<sup>28</sup> Finally, if the pericope is a hypothetical disputation against the nations but declared for the encouragement of Israel, then the objection vanishes concerning the beginning woe-cries as either an inappropriate rhetorical device or an unusually harsh condemnation against Israel.

In fact, it is very interesting to witness on the one hand how Westermann argues for vv.11-13 as an address against the nations, and on the other hand how Hermisson argues the same for vv.9-10 and 11b. Together

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<sup>28</sup> While it is true that **פָּעַל** (work) is found in vv.9b and 11b, and the word pair of **אָב** (father) and **בָּנִים** (sons) between vv.10 and 11b, we should observe that **יִצְרָאֵל** (shaper) occurs in vv.9 (*bis*) and 11a, **יָדָיִם** (hands) in vv.9b, 11b, and 12b, **צִוָּה** (to command) in vv.11b and 12b, and the pair of **אֲדָמָה** (earth) and **אָדָם** (humanity) between vv.9a and 12a. All the above are key words rather than general vocabulary like **אָמַר** (to say), which appears in vv.9b, 10a, 11a, and 13b.

with Leene, the three of them all agree that in v.10 the challenge is not meant for one's own father, that the expanded messenger formula of v.11a with the third person suffix instead of the usual second person argues against the speech being addressed to Israel, and that in particular v.11b cannot be addressed to Israel either. Hermisson, however, finds it difficult to understand how the emphasized **אֵין** (he and nobody else) in v.13b $\alpha$  can be a polemical phrase against the nations (13-14). He is indeed correct, as he (16) follows Leene (321-322) in seeing the nations protesting against their fate under Cyrus. But the objection again does not hold if we combine Leene's argument with Westermann's observation on the original subject of dispute. In other words, vv.9-10 represent critical remarks generated among the nations<sup>29</sup> against YHWH's apparent abandoning of his own people. The statements may even be taken as a subtle challenge to YHWH's sovereign power. Vv.11-13 then present YHWH's refutation. The messenger formula is

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<sup>29</sup> The critics are unlikely to be the pagan deities (*pace* Westermann 1966:136), for they are counted as among the creatures of YHWH both explicitly in v.9 and implicitly in v.12. Moreover, the following pericope, Isa 45:14-17, immediately moves on to discuss the relationship between Israel and the nations (v.14) and their confession to YHWH (v.15) as 'El hiding himself, the God of Israel who saves'.

first expanded to reaffirm the close relationship between YHWH and Israel, and then the divine speech begins by recapitulating the criticism with an ironic tone. The beginning word **דְּאִתִּיָּהּ** (the coming things) of v.11b has often invited various emendations, yet we are obliged to defend the reading of **דְּאִתִּיָּהּ** for the very reason that it is in fact the very key word relating to the point of dispute. What is going to happen to Israel determines whether YHWH has the power to save, and indeed it is Cyrus and nobody else who will accomplish YHWH's saving purpose for Israel. YHWH does not require the nations to remind him, for he is the creator of both the universe and humanity. The 'handler-handled' metaphor has now come full circle, and the contenders are being reminded of their own insignificance. The parallel structure of vv.12-13a highlights the supremacy of YHWH, and at the same time leads on to the climax in v.13b, which answers the criticism by pointing to YHWH's power over this pagan conqueror and his unconditional obedience in return. The omission of Cyrus' name here does not suggest an intentional ambiguity, for the close affinities between this and the preceding pericopae (Isa 44:24-28 and 45:1-8) will have made it clear that the identity of the human protagonist remains unchanged. The theme of this disputation between YHWH and the nations is undoubtedly again his absolute sovereignty.

2.6 Isaiah 45:18-19

	כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה <sup>18</sup>
הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים	בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם
הוּא כּוֹנֵנָה	יֹצֵר הָאָרֶץ וְעֹשֶׂה
לְשֹׁבֹת יִצְרָה	לֹא-תִהְיֶה בְרָאָה
	אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד:
בְּמָקוֹם אֶרֶץ חֹשֶׁךְ	לֹא בִסְתֵר דִּבַּרְתִּי <sup>19</sup>
תִּהְיֶה בְּקִשּׁוּבִי	לֹא אָמַרְתִּי לְזָרַע יַעֲקֹב
מִגִּיד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:	אֲנִי יְהוָה דֹּבֵר צֶדֶק

<sup>18</sup> For thus said YHWH,  
 Who created the heavens,  
 He is God;  
 Who shaped the earth and made it,  
 He himself established it;  
 Not a chaos he created it,  
 To sit (enthroned) he shaped it.

I am YHWH, and there is none besides.

<sup>19</sup> Not in secrecy I spoke,  
 At a place - a land of darkness;  
 Nor have I said to Jacob's offspring:



In chaos<sup>30</sup> seek me!  
 I am YHWH, who speaks victory,  
 Who declares order.

According to Westermann, '45.18f is relatively complete in itself, yet it cannot be called an independent unit'. Because of the emphatic  $\aleph^l$  which appears thrice in these two verses, they 'remind one of the disputations' (1966:140). As an introduction to the following passages, v.18 is related to 45:20-25 and v.19 to 46:1-13, the former being a word spoken to the nations defending the positive attitude of YHWH to them and the latter addressed to Israel disputing the alleged futility of YHWH's promises. On the other hand, Whybray considers the passage as 'an independent, though perhaps fragmentary, piece' and having 'the function, if not precisely the form, of a disputation'. He further locates the matter at issue in v.19, namely, 'the character and reliability of the prophetic word' (1975:110). Haag is also of the opinion that the two verses form an independent pericope, in which the

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<sup>30</sup>  $\aleph$  has no preposition here. *BHS* suggests, probably on the ground of haplography, inserting  $\aleph$ , but without any textual support. Davidson (1901:§69,r.1) takes the word as one example of an adverbial accusative of place. Cf. Watts (1987:160) and Hermisson (1987:52).

reliability of YHWH's promise is the issue at dispute (1976:196-197). Just as YHWH has created the world not as a senseless chaos (תֹּהוֹ) but as a residence place for humanity, so his promise for Israel is no illusion (תֹּהוֹ) but will lead to a reliable order of life and salvation. Furthermore, Haag suggests that the theme of this disputation is about YHWH's sovereign power in carrying out his plan in both creation and history.

An examination of the other five occurrences of תֹּהוֹ (chaos) in Isa 40:17, 23; 41:29; 44:9; and 49:4 indicates that the connotation of powerlessness can be distinctly identified from the context. Moreover, the word לְשִׁבָּת is commonly rendered 'for habitation'. But once again a glance at the other three appearances of the word in Isa 40:22; 44:13; and 47:14 suggests that perhaps a more accurate understanding should be 'to sit' - with the added nuance of being in control. As a result, the proclamation of YHWH as creator is elaborated with an affirmation highlighting precisely his sovereignty. This is further substantiated by the conclusion of v.19b, where YHWH is portrayed as a supreme ruler bringing law and order (מִשְׁרִים) following his victory and success (צֶדֶק). We therefore conclude that Isa 45:18-19 is an independent pericope of disputation focusing on neither the nations' destiny nor the outcome of prophecy, but YHWH's unique sovereign

power over both the universe and his people: 'I am YHWH, and there is none besides' (v.18b).

## 2.7 Isaiah 46:1-7

הָיָה עֲצִבְיָתָם לַחַיָּה וְלַבְּהֵמָה	<sup>01</sup> כָּרַע בֵּל קָרַס נְבוֹ
נִשְׁאַתִּיכֶם עֲמוּסוֹת מִשָּׂא לַעֲרִפָּה:	
לֹא יָכֹלוּ מַלֵּט מִשָּׂא	<sup>02</sup> קָרַסוּ כָרְעוּ בַחֲדָיו
וּנְפָשָׁם בַּשָּׂבִי הִלְכָה:	
וְכָל־שְׂאֲרֵית בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל	<sup>03</sup> שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי בֵּית הָעֶקֶב
הַנִּשְׁאָאִים מִגִּי־רָחֹם:	הַעֲמִסִּים מִגִּי־כֶסֶן
וְעַד־שִׁירָה אָנֹכִי אֶסְבֵּל	<sup>04</sup> וְעַד־זִקְנָה אָנֹכִי הוּא
וְאָנֹכִי אֶסְבֵּל וְאִמְלִט:	אָנֹכִי עֲשִׂיתִי וְאָנֹכִי אֲשָׂא
וְתַמְשְׁלוּנִי וְנִדְמָה:	<sup>05</sup> לִמִּי תִדְמִיוּנִי וְתִשְׁוֶוּ
וְכֶסֶף בַּקָּנָה יִשְׁקֻלוּ	<sup>06</sup> תְּזֻלִּים זָהָב מִכִּיס
וְסִגְדוֹ אֶף־יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶוּ:	יִשְׁכַּרְוּ צוּרָהּ וַיַּעֲשֶׂהָ אֵל
וַיִּבְנִיחָהּ תַּחְתִּיו וַיַּעֲמֵד	<sup>07</sup> יִשְׁאַתָּהּ עַל־כַּתֶּף יִסְבֶּלְתָּהּ
מִמְקוֹמוֹ לֹא יָמִישׁ	
מִצֻּרָתָהּ לֹא יוֹשִׁיעֶנּוּ:	אֶף־יִצָּעַק אֵלָיו וְלֹא יַעֲנֶה

<sup>01</sup> Bel bowed, Nebo cowered,<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> ט, ז, ט, and ב all read the perfect קָרַס instead of מ's participle קָרַס, and so does the defective spelling of ז<sup>a</sup>. Thus Driver favours the alteration on the grounds

Their images were for the beast and the animal,  
 Things you carry were lifted, a burden to  
<sup>02</sup>They cowered, they bowed together, [the weary.  
 They could not rescue a burden,  
 And they themselves went into captivity.

<sup>03</sup>Listen to me! O house of Jacob,  
 And every remnant of the house of Israel;  
 Those lifted from the belly,  
 Those carried from the womb.  
<sup>04</sup>And until old age I am He,  
 And until grey hair<sup>32</sup> I myself shall bear;  
 I myself have made and I myself shall carry,  
 And I myself shall bear and I shall rescue.

<sup>05</sup>To whom will you liken me and resemble;  
 And compare me that we may be alike?

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of parallelism and sense, with the support of the ancient versions (1935:399). On the other hand, despite his reference to Gitay's comment that 'the participle following the perfect creates a feeling of vividness and actuality' (1981:201), and his crediting מ as the more difficult reading, Hermisson's translation suggests nonetheless his decision for קָרַם (1991:85-86). We agree that textual evidence must be given the priority over stylistic considerations.

<sup>32</sup> L lacks the mark over ש in שִׁיבָה, whereas most Hebrew Mss read שִׁיבָה.

<sup>06</sup>Those squandering gold from a purse,  
 And silver on the balance they weigh;  
 They hire a goldsmith and he makes it El,  
 They fall down, indeed, they prostrate themselves;  
<sup>07</sup>They carry it on shoulder, they bear it,  
 And they set it down on its base and it stands,  
 From its place it will not depart;  
 Indeed he cries out to it, but it will not answer,  
 From his troubles it will not save him.

Schoors (1973:273-278) and Melugin (1976:33-35, 131-135) both follow Begrich (1963:49, 51) in classifying Isa 46:5-11 as a disputation speech, but Melugin's suggestion that the passage, together with 40:18-24 and 25-26 'betray a stereotyped structure' (33) must be deemed incorrect, because the other two texts simply do not conform to his proposed fourfold structure. On the other hand, Schoors argues in detail for v.8 to be the connection between vv.5-7 and 9-11, as it serves as a conclusion of the preceding verses and an introduction to what follows at the same time. But he admits that there is only a high probability and no proof for the unity of vv.5-11 afterall (277).

However, it is not difficult to notice that the passage of Isa 46:1-7 is tied closely together with a number of key words, namely, נָשָׂא (to carry, vv.1b, 3b,

4b, 7a),  $\text{וַיַּשְׁמֵץ}$  (to sustain, vv.1b, 3b),  $\text{וַיִּלְצֵם}$  (to rescue, vv.2a, 4b),  $\text{וַיִּבְרֶן$  (to bear, vv.4a & b, v.7a), and  $\text{וַיַּעַשׂ}$  (to make, vv.4b, 6b), whereas the same motif of carrying does not continue beyond v.7. Moreover, the reproaching address to Israel as 'rebels' (v.8b) and 'stubborn-hearted' (v.13a) appears to be incongruent with the reassuring tone in vv.3-4. Consequently, we agree with Clifford (1984b:130-132), Sawyer (1986:101-104), and Hermisson (1991:89-90) that Isa 46:1-7 should be considered as an independent pericope distinct from vv.8-13.

The pericope falls into three parts, with the theme of YHWH's sovereign power over his own people (vv.3-4) portrayed in stark antithesis to the impotence and encumbrance of the pagan idols. The disputational tone of YHWH's speech is not only reflected by the challenge in v.5, which clearly echoes the similar rhetorical questions in 40:18 and 25 within the two beginning disputations of Isa 40:12-20 and 21-26, but also embedded in the deliberate juxtaposition of the two contrasting pictures of the idols being carried into captivity (vv.1-2) and YHWH carrying the remnants of his people out of exile (vv.3-4). Consequently, we side with Spykerboer (1976:146-147) on the issue of authenticity relating to vv.5-7 against Westermann (1966:148-149), and it is significant to observe that the theme of

YHWH's sovereignty is here not argued from his role of creator, but rather verified by his power to save (vv.4b & 7b).

## 2.8 Summary

Having examined seven disputations pericopae in Isaiah 40-55, we may summarize our results into two important observations:

First of all, there appears to be no uniform structure among these seven pericopae. While Isa 40:27-31 displays the pattern of quotation and refutation described by Gunkel and insisted on by Graffy, Isa 45:9-13 and 18-19 probably just allude to the opposing views. On the other hand, Isa 40:12-20 and 21-26 together with 46:1-7 reflect the format of substantiation and invalidation as observed by Elliger, while Isa 44:24-28 confirms von Waldow's proposed sequence of disputational basis and final conclusion. Moreover, disputations are seen to occur between the prophet and his contemporaries (Isa 40:12-20, 21-26, 27-31; 44:24-28), YHWH and his people (Isa 45:18-19; 46:1-7), or YHWH and the nations (Isa 45:9-13). We therefore disagree with von Waldow, Schoors, and Naidoff concerning the existence of a common structure for the disputational pericopae, and may want to go along with

Graffy in not labelling them all as 'disputation speeches'; but we must also acknowledge with Westermann, Elliger, Melugin, and Hermisson the fact that there are various forms of disputations in Isaiah 40-55, as each and every pericope we have examined indeed exhibits an unmistakable disputational function and style.

Secondly, despite their diversity, these disputations share a common theme of YHWH's sovereignty and power, just as Merendino has suggested. Sometimes YHWH's power is argued on the basis of his role as creator (Isa 40:12-20, 21-26, 27-31), where the motif of salvation is absent; sometimes YHWH's sovereignty is contended on the ground of his saving acts for his people (Isa 46:1-7), where the motif of creation is likewise absent. On the other hand, in Isa 44:24-28; 45:9-13 and 18-19, YHWH's lordship over both creation and history is used, just like in the descriptive praises of the Psalter, to substantiate his unique supremacy over all forces friendly or hostile. In other words, we do not find in these disputations the major theme of YHWH's redemption, and there is no clear paradigm either of creation being employed in support of redemption, or of creation faith being identical with or subsumed under salvation faith. The disputations set out to defend YHWH's absolute sovereignty in the situation when his people become sceptical about his power amidst



the imperial forces which have brought along Israel's humiliating destruction and YHWH's apparent defeat. It is under this major theme of divine sovereignty that the dual motifs of creation and redemption are to be understood.

There are, however, other disputational pericopae in Isaiah 40-55 apart from the seven already examined. Here we follow Dijkstra's proposal to distinguish between those focusing on YHWH's sovereign power and those dealing with Israel's past failure. It is to these disputations on YHWH's faithfulness that we shall turn our attention in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISPUTATIONS ON YHWH'S FAITHFULNESS

#### 3.1 Introduction

In addition to the seven disputations examined in the last chapter, there are three more pericopae in which a theological controversy is being conducted. However, the point of disagreement is no longer the sovereign power of YHWH. In Isa 48:1-11, 12-16; and 49:14-21 we observe instead the issue of YHWH's faithfulness being debated between the prophet and his audience. Moreover, three other pericopae, namely, Isa 42:18-25; 43:22-28; and 50:1-3, apparently share the same theme as well. Form critics seem unable to make up their minds whether the latter texts should be classified as trial speeches or disputations, but they all agree that within these passages YHWH is under the accusation of having abandoned his own people. By discussing them together with the second group of disputations, we are anticipating the result of our

interpretation of these texts. An evaluation of the various scholarly opinions is best carried out within the investigation of each individual pericope, and we shall begin with Isa 49:14-21, which again is recognized as a proper disputation speech even under the stringent definition of Graffy (1984:91-98).

### 3.2 Isaiah 49:14-21

וְאֵלֶיךָ שָׁבְנוּ:	<sup>14</sup> וְנֹאמֶר צִיּוֹן עֲזָבְנִי יְהוָה
מִרְחֹם בֵּן-בִּטְנָה	<sup>15</sup> וְתִשָּׁבֶה אִשָּׁה עוֹלָה
וְאֵלֶיךָ לֹא אָשׁוּבָה:	בְּמִ-אֱלֹהִים תִּשָּׁבֶהָ
חֲוִמֶיךָ בְּגִדֵי תַמְרִיד:	<sup>16</sup> חֵן עַל-כַּפִּיִם תִּתֶּנִּי
וּמִתְרַבֵּיךָ מִמֶּנּוּ יֵצְאוּ:	<sup>17</sup> מִתְּרֵי בְנֶיךָ מִדְּרִסֶיךָ
כֻּלָּם בְּקִבְצוֹ כְּאוֹ-לֶךָ	<sup>18</sup> שְׂאִי-סָבִיב עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאִי
וּתְקַשְׂרִים כִּכְלָה:	תִּי-אֲנִי נְאֻם-יְהוָה
וְאֶרְצִי תִרְסֶתִיךָ	כִּי כֻלָּם בְּעֵדִי תִלְכְּשִׁי
וּרְחֻקוֹ מִכְלָעֶיךָ:	<sup>19</sup> כִּי תִרְבֶּתִיךָ וְשִׁמְמֶתִיךָ
	כִּי עֲתָה תִצְרִי מִיּוֹשֵׁב
בְּנֵי שִׁבְלֶיךָ	<sup>20</sup> עוֹד יֹאמְרוּ בְּאֶזְנוֹךָ
בִּשְׂחָ-לִי וְאִשְׁבָּה:	צֵר-לִי הַמָּקוֹם
מִי יִלְדֶּ-לִי אֶת-אֱלֹהִים	<sup>21</sup> וְאִמְרָתָּ בִלְבָבֶךָ
גֹּלָה וְסוֹרָה וְאֱלֹהִים מִי גִבּוֹר	וְאֲנִי שְׂכוּלָה וְגִבּוֹרָה
אֱלֹהִים אֵיפֹה הֵם:	חֵן אֲנִי בְּשִׂאֲרֹתַי לְבָדִי

<sup>14</sup> And Zion said: YHWH has forsaken me;

And my Lord has forgotten me.

<sup>15</sup> Will a woman forget her sucking child,

Not having compassion on<sup>1</sup> the son of her womb?

Even these<sup>2</sup> will forget,

But I, I shall not forget you.

<sup>16</sup> Look! On both palms I have engraved you;

Your walls are before me always.

<sup>17</sup> Your builders<sup>3</sup> will<sup>4</sup> move faster than your

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<sup>1</sup> BHS following BHK to read מִרחֶם (Piel ptc, one having compassion = a mother; see GKC §122c for its gender) is apparently endorsed by אֵלֶּה in the next line (North 1964:193), but is not supported by any textual evidence. 𐤅 and 𐤄 change תִּשְׁכַּחֲנָה into a singular verb to match אִשָּׁה, but follow 𐤓 to read מִרחֶם, while 𐤆 supports 𐤓 throughout. The alleged discrepancy between אִשָּׁה and אֵלֶּה thus seems to be perfectly acceptable in both 𐤓 and 𐤆.

<sup>2</sup> 𐤅 takes אֵלֶּה as object, and Cairo Geniza fragment reads תִּשְׁכַּחֲנָה (Niph), but the parallelism between v.15ba and β apparently requires אֵלֶּה and אֲנֹכִי both to be read as subjects. For the same reason, BHS's suggestion of תִּשְׁכַּחֲנָה (as a form of *nun energicum*) is to be rejected.

<sup>3</sup> 𐤓's בְּנֵיךָ (your sons) is supported only by Σ. 𐤒<sup>a</sup> has בְּנֵיךָ (your builders), which is followed by A, Θ, and 𐤅, whereas 𐤅's οἰκοδομηθήσῃ (you will be built) and 𐤆's יִבְנוּן (they will build) also support 𐤒<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> 𐤓ִדְרָה is taken as a prophetic perfect, as it is used in parallel with יִצְאֵר; see Davidson (1901:§41b).

destroyers;<sup>5</sup>

And your devastators will depart from you.

<sup>18</sup> Lift up your eyes round about and see!

Let them all be gathered, let them come to you!<sup>6</sup>

As I live - Oracle of YHWH -

Surely all of them like ornaments you will wear,

And you will bind them on like the bride.

<sup>19</sup> Surely your devastations and your desolations,

And the land of your destruction<sup>7</sup> -

Surely now you will be crowded from settlement,

And those swallowing you up will be far away.

<sup>20</sup> Yet they will say in your ears,

Sons of your bereavement:

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<sup>5</sup> We follow  $\mathfrak{Q}^a$  to read  $\text{מְדוֹרְסִיךְ}$  ( $\text{מִן} + \text{m pl } \text{Qal ptc of } \text{דָּרַס} + 2 \text{ f s suff}$ ), which is more common than the *Piel* ptc occurring only here in  $\mathfrak{M}$ . As a result, the verse achieves a better division and even a better meaning.

<sup>6</sup> Both  $\text{נִקְבְּצוּ}$  and  $\text{בָּאוּ}$  are taken to be precatative perfects; see Davidson (1901:§41,r.5).

<sup>7</sup> Torrey's revocalization of the three nouns into verbs (1928:387) is followed by Muilenburg (1956:575), Watts (1987:184-185), and *BHS*. But it is an improvement of  $\mathfrak{M}$  without any textual support. It is true that  $\text{תְּרַסְתִּיךְ}$  is an *hapax*, but so are the proposed  $\text{תְּרַבְתִּיךְ}$  (*Piel*, usually *Hiph*) and  $\text{שְׁמַמְתִּיךְ}$  (*Polel*, again usually *Hiph*). On the other hand, the pair of nouns  $\text{תְּרַב}$  and  $\text{שְׁמַמֹּת}$  occur in Isa 61:4, and  $\text{שְׁמַמֹּת}$  is also found in Isa 49:8.

Narrow for me is the place,

Make room for me that I may dwell!

<sup>21</sup>And you will say in your heart:

Who has borne me these?

And me, bereaved and barren,

An exile and outcast, but these who has raised?

Look at me! I was left all alone.

These - where are they from?

While recognizing the similarity in form and function between Isa 49:14-21 and 40:27-31, Westermann (1964b:120-121 & 132-133, 1966:177, and 1987:36) insists on reading 49:14-26 as an extended proclamation of salvation (*Heilsankündigung*), which is composed of three parts, vv.14-20, 21-23, and 24-26, and is based on the tripartite structure of the lament complaining against God (v.14), about oneself (v.21), and against the enemies (v.24). On the other hand, Melugin (1976:147-151) observes that v.21 is an expression of amazement rather than a genuine question, and that v.24 is not a typical question of a lament because it doubts YHWH's ability to deliver his people. Consequently, he disagrees with the structure proposed by Westermann, but suggests that the three genre units should be divided into vv.14-21, 22-23, and 24-26. Nevertheless, Melugin still thinks that all three units belong to the genre of the speech of salvation. As mentioned before, Graffy

(1984:91-98) considers however Isa 49:14-25 to be one of the two disputation speeches in Isaiah 40-55. He divides the passage into the introductory quotation (v.14), to be followed by four consecutive refutations (vv.15, 16-21, 22-23, and 24-25). The parallel grammatical structure between vv.15 and 24-25 suggests an inclusion which leaves v.26 out of the original unit. Thus both Graffy and Melugin argue against Westermann that v.21 must be taken as the conclusion instead of the beginning of a section.

But what about the determination of the genre? In our opinion, Isa 49:14-21 undoubtedly represents a disputation designed to refute Zion's complaint of YHWH's abandoning his own people. The pericope may be further analysed into three parts: vv.14-16 focus on the motif of forgetfulness, vv.17-19 highlight the rebuilding of the ruins, and vv.20-21 conclude with the rehabilitation of the city. Just as previously in Isa 40:27-31, the refutation not only affirms YHWH's faithfulness to his people, it also draws out the consequence of this faithfulness, which will result in the unexpected restoration of Zion. It is therefore clear from the overall structure of the pericope that its primary function is not to proclaim a message of salvation, but rather to dispute the people's doubt about YHWH's faithfulness.

On the other hand, Isa 49:22-26 must be kept as a separate pericope, for the passage concentrates from beginning to end on YHWH's sovereignty over the nations. Judging from this theme, we cannot exclude v.26 from the rest, nor can we separate vv.22-23 from 24-26, where the irony of these mighty warriors being turned into foster fathers and nursing mothers may otherwise be lost. V.24 is undoubtedly a rhetorical question without any disputational intention. Moreover, the two messenger formulae remind us of 49:8, which serves as the opening to a promise of salvation. We therefore side with Westermann and Melugin in thinking that here in 49:22-26 we have another promise of salvation instead of a continuation of the disputation speech of vv.14-21.

Having said that, we are not denying the obvious connection between vv.14-21 and 22-26, especially when similar connections must also be recognized between vv.8-13 and 14-21. Just as the divine promise of the return of the exile prompts a debate over YHWH's faithfulness to his people, the refutation which points to Zion's restoration likewise requires an elaboration on the powerful dimension of YHWH's redemption. But because of thematic and formal differences, such connections are better taken as links among various pericopae rather than developments within



one pericope. It is therefore significant to notice that while we have identified the point of dispute in 49:14-21 to be over YHWH's faithfulness, the predominant theme of YHWH's sovereignty and power is in fact still very much in the surrounding.

### 3.3 Isaiah 48:1-11

הַבְּקָרָאִים בְּשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל	שְׁמַעוּ-זֹאת בֵּית-יַעֲקֹב <sup>01</sup>
וּמִמִּי יְהוּדָה יֵצֵאוּ	
וּבְאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִזְכִּירוּ	הַנְּשַׁבְּעִים בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה
לֹא בְּאֵמַת וְלֹא בַּצִּדְקָה:	
וְעַל-אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּסֻמּוֹ	כִּי-מַעִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ נִקְרָא <sup>02</sup>
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ:	
וּמִפִּי יֵצֵאוּ וְאֲשַׁמְרֵם	הֲרֵאשֹׁנוֹת מֵאֵז הַבְּדִיתִי <sup>03</sup>
פְּתָאִם עֲשִׂיתִי וְתִבְאֲנֶה:	
וּמִצִּיּוֹן בְּחֹשֶׁךְ:	מִדַּעֲתִי כִי קִשָּׁה אָתָּה <sup>04</sup>
בְּטָרֶם תִּבְּרֹא הִשְׁמַעְתִּיךָ	וְגִיד בְּרִזְל עָרְפֶּךָ
וּפִסְלִי וְנִסְכֵּי צֹרִם:	וְאֶגִּיד לְךָ מֵאֵז <sup>05</sup>
וְאַתָּם תִּלּוּא תִּגִּידוּ	כֹּן-תֹאמַר עֲצָבִי עָשָׂם
	שְׁמַעְתָּ תִּזְנֶה בְּלֹה <sup>06</sup>
וּבְצָרוֹת וְלֹא יִדְעֶתֶם:	הִשְׁמַעְתִּיךָ חֲדָשׁוֹת מַעֲתָה
וְלִפְנֵי-יָוִם וְלֹא שְׁמַעְתֶּם	עָתָה נִבְרָאוּ וְלֹא מֵאֵז <sup>07</sup>
כֹּן-תֹאמַר הִנֵּה יִדְעִיתִין:	
גַּם מֵאֵז לֹא-פִתְחָה אֲזִנִּיךָ	גַּם לֹא-שְׁמַעְתָּ גַּם לֹא יִדְעָתָ <sup>08</sup>

וּפִשַׁע מִבְּטֵן קָרָא לָךְ:

כִּי יָדַעְתִּי בְּגוֹד תִּבְגְּדוּ

וַיִּתְּלֵנִי אֲחֻשָׁם-לָךְ

<sup>09</sup> לְמַעַן שְׁמִי אֲזַרֶּיךָ אִפִּי

לְבָלְתִּי דְרִירִיתָּךְ:

בְּחֻתֶּיךָ בָּבוֹר עָבִי:

<sup>10</sup> הִנֵּה צִרְפְּתֶיךָ וְלֹא בִבְסֶךָ

כִּי אֵיךְ יִחַל

<sup>11</sup> לְמַעַנִּי לְמַעַנִּי אֶעֱשֶׂה

וּבְבוֹדִי לְאַחֵר לֹא-אֶתֵּן:

<sup>01</sup> Hear this! O House of Jacob,

Those called by the name of Israel,

And from the waters of Judah they emerge;

Those swearing by the name of YHWH,

And the God of Israel they invoke,

Not in truth and not in justice;

<sup>02</sup> Surely by the holy city they called themselves,

And upon Israel's God they supported themselves,

Yahweh of hosts is his name.

<sup>03</sup> The former things from of old I declared,

And from my mouth they emerged and I made them

Suddenly I made and they came. [heard;

<sup>04</sup> Because I knew that you were stubborn,

And a sinew of iron was your neck,

And your forehead was bronze;

<sup>05</sup> And I declared to you from of old,

Before it would come I announced to you,

Lest you should say: my idol made them,

And my image and my statue commanded them.  
<sup>06</sup> You have heard, seeing<sup>8</sup> all of it.  
 And you - will you not declare?  
 I have announced to you new things from now,  
 And secrets and you have not known them;  
<sup>07</sup> Now they have been created, but not from of old,  
 And before today you have not heard them,  
 Lest you should say: Look! I knew them.  
<sup>08</sup> Neither have you heard nor have you known,  
 Nor from of old has your ear opened.  
 For I knew you were indeed treacherous,  
 And a rebel from birth you were called.

<sup>09</sup> For my name's sake I shall postpone my anger,  
 And for<sup>9</sup> my praise I shall be restrained for you,  
 So as not to cut you off.  
<sup>10</sup> Look! I refined you but not with silver,  
 I chose you in a furnace of affliction.  
<sup>11</sup> For my sake, for my sake I shall make,  
 [For how will it be profaned?]

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<sup>8</sup> Following the suggestion of Freedman (editorial comment quoted in McKenzie 1968:93,n.c-c), we read לִמְעַן as an infinitive absolute.

<sup>9</sup> לְמַעַן at the beginning of v.9aα also governs 9aβ.

And my glory to another I shall not give.

According to Hermisson (1992:208), the passage may be divided into an introduction (vv.1-2) and the message proper formulated as a divine speech in three parts (vv.3-6a, 6b-8, and 9-11). Thus the beginning two verses contain a call to attention with an address and detailed characterization of the addressee, and completed with a confession formula. The first and second parts of the divine message are constructed stylistically in parallel; the former (vv.3-6a) on the proclamation of the 'former things', whereas the latter (vv.6b-8) on the announcement of the 'new things'. The conclusion (vv.9-11) then discloses why, despite Israel's rebellious nature, YHWH still brings about the new salvation for his people.

Hermisson is certainly among the minority of commentators who insist that 'the text is constructed on the whole consistently and seems to give rise to no reason for literary critical interventions' (209),<sup>10</sup> but

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<sup>10</sup> For a succinct account of the various proposals by scholars since Duhm attempting to reconstruct an original text, see Hermisson (1992:210). Apart from Hermisson, von Waldow (1953:32-35), Muilenburg (1956:553), Melugin (1976:40), and Spykerboer (1976:156) all maintain the integrity of the final text.

he seems to be the only one able to offer a convincing argument for holding such a view. Between the two sections on the 'former things' (vv.3-6a) and 'new things' (vv.6b-8), Hermisson observes a point by point parallelism from beginning to end. Both start with the reference to the proclamation (of 'former things' in v.3a and of 'new things' in v.6b) and its timing ('from of old' in v.3a but 'from now', 'not from of old' in vv.6b and 7a). Both then continue with the fulfilment of the respective proclamations in the language of creation ('suddenly I made' in v.3b and 'now they have been created' in v.7a). Subsequently, YHWH's knowledge of the people's nature is emphasized ('because I knew' in v.4a and 'for I knew' in v.8b), while the reasons for the different treatments of the proclamations are stated ('lest you should say' in both vv.5b and 7b). Finally, the concluding affirmation, 'you have heard', in v.6a is also deliberately echoed with 'you have not heard' in v.8a.

Similar repetitions may be observed in the introductory address of vv.1-2 as well (222): **הַבְּקָרָאִים** in v.1aα is echoed by **בְּקָרָאִי** in v.2aα, **בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה** in v.1bα is reiterated by **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ** in v.2b, and **וּבְאֵלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** in v.1bα is duplicated by **וְעַל-אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** in v.2aβ. But does it therefore suggest that vv.1aβ and 1bβ are later supplements? The phrase 'from the waters of Judah',

although being unusual, is not impossible. First of all, it is true that only here the prophet includes the name 'Judah' together with the word pair 'Jacob / Israel', but he does mention 'the cities of Judah' twice in 40:9 and 44:26, and McKenzie may be correct when he indicates that 'the three titles suggest the reunion of all Israel' (1968:95). Secondly, the suggestion of *BHS* to amend מִמֶּנִּי to 'the similar sounding but more usual מִמֵּנִי "from the loins of"' (Watts 1987:175) is very tempting, but it has no support from the ancient versions. Sawyer, however, points to two possible allusions for the imagery of water: the first one in Ps 68:26, 'where the people are described as "you who are of Israel's fountain"' (1986:111), and the second one in Num 24:7, which contains the celebrated prophecy of Balaam, 'Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters'. On the other hand, the phrase in v.1b3, לֹא בְאֵמָה וְלֹא בַעֲדָקָה, is often considered 'un-Isaianic', but that is all because of the impression that '[n]owhere else does the prophet attack his audience with such vehemence' (Sawyer 1986:110).

On the contrary, Hermisson aptly argues that 'the continuous analysis of the text with the aim of separating an uncritical salvation speech from an annotated reproaching speech critical of Israel destroys exactly the particular contour of the text and takes

away from it its theological eccentricity' (211). The attempt to achieve an originally uncritical message is rendered unnecessary, as the tenor of the whole speech is to declare that YHWH acts for his people not because of their merits, but for the sake of his own name, which is highlighted in both the beginning (vv.1 and 2) and the conclusion (v.9). All along YHWH is well aware of the rebellious nature of his people, and that is why he has acted differently with the declarations of the 'former things' and the 'new things'. Here we agree with Hermisson once again that the 'former things' refer to the announcement of divine judgement, whereas the 'new things' refer to the proclamation of salvation (234). YHWH announces his judgement on his people beforehand, so that when it happens, they are supposed to recognize the hand of their own God and will not mistake the exile to be a victory of the nations' deities. However, YHWH has not declared until now the new promises of salvation, for he does not want his people to have taken the judgement lightly because of the impending mercy. Thus the reference to Israel's sinful nature is not meant to be a condemnation which carries on the old tradition of the judgement prophecy; it is rather part of the message of salvation dealing with the apparent objection raised because of Israel's rebellious record.

It seems therefore unnecessary to consider

vv.5b and 7b as secondary (*pace* Hermisson 1992:211 and 215), despite the mentioning of the idols in the former. The two half-verses not only share the parallel structure in relation to the 'former things' and 'new things', but actually supply very important information integral to the arguments of both sections. On the other hand, Hermisson (207) is correct to point out that the language of the abrupt question in v.11a does not fit well in the immediate context, giving rise to the adaptations in  $\mathfrak{Q}^a$  and the ancient versions. It may be considered a gloss, just like the one found in Isa 40:7b. Hermisson further denies the pericope its classification as a disputation by von Waldow, for 'neither do we encounter the usual topic of the so-called disputational speech in DtIsa, nor does the division into a basis and a final conclusion correspond to the logic of this text' (212). Nevertheless, judging from the above analysis, we find that the pericope does carry a distinct flavour of argument over Israel's rebellious nature. Hermisson is correct to point out that the subject matter is not the usual one of YHWH's sovereignty; but, as we have shown in the previous chapter, there is no need to restrict the disputations in Isaiah 40-55 to one particular structure. It is significant that Hermisson sees an affiliation between Isa 48:1-11 and 43:22-28, as we shall endeavour to argue that the so-called trial speeches against Israel



(Isa 42:18-25; 43:22-28; and 50:1-3) are in fact disputations on YHWH's faithfulness. Finally, the argument of Hermisson (213-215) regarding the late origin of this literary text does not appear to be as convincing as his defence for its integrity. What seem to be 'clear references' to the language of Ezekiel or the Deuteronomist may not be anything more than the sharing of a common social and religious milieu during the period of exile. Most important of all, the message of YHWH acting for Israel despite the latter's obstinacy fits in perfectly well with the comforting intention of the prophecy in Isaiah 40-55.

### 3.4 Isaiah 48:12-16

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִקְרָאִי	<sup>12</sup> שְׁמַע אֵלַי יַעֲקֹב
אֲף אָנֹכִי אֲחִירוֹן:	אֲנִי-הוּא אָנֹכִי רִאשׁוֹן
וַיִּמְנִי טַפְחָה שָׁמַיִם	<sup>13</sup> אֲף-יָדִי יִסְדָּה אֲרֶץ
וַעֲמָדִי בַתְּדֹר:	קֹרָא אָנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵהֶם
מִי בָהֶם תִּגִּיד אֶת-אֱלֹהֶ	<sup>14</sup> תִּקְבְּצוּ כָל־כֶּם וְשִׁמְעוּ
וְזָרְעוּ כְּשִׂדִּים:	יִהְיֶה אֲהַבּוּ נַעֲשֶׂה תִפְצּוּ בְּבִבְלָ
תִּבְיֹאתֵי וְתִצְלִיחַ דְּרָכּוֹ:	<sup>15</sup> אָנֹכִי אָנֹכִי דִּבַּרְתִּי אֲף-קִרְאתִיו
לֹא מִרְאֵשׁ בִּסְתֵּר דִּבַּרְתִּי	<sup>16</sup> קִרְבוּ אֵלַי שִׁמְעוּ-זֹאת
מִעַתָּה הִיוֹתָה שֵׁם אָנֹכִי	וְעַתָּה אֲדַבֵּר יִהְיֶה שְׁלֹחֲכִי וְרוּחִי:

<sup>12</sup> Listen to me! O Jacob,

And Israel, who is called by me.

I am He, I am first,

Indeed I am last;

<sup>13</sup> Indeed my hand founded earth,

And my right hand extended heavens;

I was calling to them,

Let them stand up together.

<sup>14</sup> Assemble, all of you, and listen!

Who among you<sup>11</sup> has declared these?

YHWH loved him; he will do his delight upon Babylon,

And his arm upon Chaldeans.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>15</sup> I, I myself have spoken; indeed I called him;

I brought him and he will prosper his way.

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<sup>11</sup> We follow some forty Hebrew Mss, ⑥, and some ③ Mss to read כָּכֶם (see North 1964:179 and Watts 1987:175). Although ⑥ and ②<sup>a</sup> support ③, their reading, 'Assemble, all of them! And they heard / Who among them has declared these?' also indicates that it is the nations who are being addressed here.

<sup>12</sup> North (1964:180) is certainly correct to 'suppose that the כ in כָּכֶם governs also כְּשֵׁיחִים'. Cf. GKC §119<sup>hh</sup>. Consequently, we disagree with Driver's remark that 'something is wrong with זֶרַע' (1958:47). ⑥ apparently reads זֶרַע (and the seed of) when it translates ἀραι σπέρμα, but both ③ and ③ support ③.

<sup>16</sup>Draw near to me! Listen to this!

I have not spoken from beginning in secrecy,

From the time of its happening there I was.

And now my Lord YHWH has sent me and his Spirit.

The pericope is clearly made up of three parts, each beginning with the call to listen (vv.12-13, 14-15, and 16a). The appeal echoes the opening of the previous pericope in 48:1, but since the two passages exhibit two very different structures, they are not to be mistaken as a unity. In the first part, YHWH declares himself to his own people as 'first' and 'last'. North (1964:94) correctly explains that 'the meaning is not exactly that Yahweh is "eternal" but that he is contemporary with all history, from its beginning to its *eschaton*'. Still McKenzie (1968:63) is perhaps even closer to the truth when he points out that 'the reference is probably not to creation and eschatology, but simply designates an enumeration of which there is only one member'. The declaration of YHWH's founding earth and extending heavens clearly illustrates his unique sovereignty, and Haag (1976:197) appropriately notes the significance of YHWH 'calling' both his people (v.12a) and the physical universe (v.13b), as his supreme authority is displayed in both creation and history.

The second part (vv.14-15) is commonly taken to refer to Cyrus without the mentioning of his name. That the pagan conqueror should be alluded to in such a manner is not unprecedented (cf. Isa 41:2-3, 25; 46:11), but it would indeed be very unusual for the prophet to say that YHWH 'loved' Cyrus, because the verb אָהַב has been reserved exclusively for the description of the special bondage between YHWH and Israel (cf. Isa 41:8 and 43:4). On the other hand, it is true that YHWH is said to have 'called' both his own people Israel (cf. Isa 41:9 and 43:1, 7) and Cyrus his anointed (cf. Isa 45:3b, 4b), but in this pericope it is Israel who is 'being called' by YHWH (v.12a). Furthermore, unless the sequence of the two consecutive pericopae is arbitrary, we must otherwise observe that, subsequent to the argument of YHWH acting despite the rebellious nature of Israel in 48:1-11, it makes much more sense here for the prophet to carry on the reaffirmation of YHWH's commitment to his people rather than to bring up the unanticipated subject of YHWH 'loving' Cyrus. The idea of YHWH acting against Babylon because of Israel (v.14b) is found earlier on in Isa 43:14, although there the text may not be in a satisfactory condition. Finally, the reference to Israel in the third person may be explained by the fact that the middle part of vv.14-15 is a direct retort addressed to the deities, yet it is

still meant for the encouragement and comfort of Israel.

V.16b cannot therefore be understood as 'the imagined response of Cyrus to the call of Yahweh' (McKenzie 1968:96). Sawyer identifies it to be 'one of several Isaianic texts about the prophet's mission' (1986:115) such as 6:8; 40:3; and 61:1. It is perhaps possible to take the statement as the prophet's own confirmation of the saving intention of YHWH, hence an integral part of the pericope, rather than to treat the half-verse as an interpolation without logical relationship to the preceding verses. The very fact that he is now sent by YHWH to speak to the people clearly indicates YHWH's sovereignty and commitment to save Israel. Consequently, we may conclude that Isa 48:12-16 is a pericope of disputation on YHWH's faithfulness, but the theme of YHWH's power over both creation and history is also present in the argument of YHWH acting for Israel against Babylon.

### 3.5 Isaiah 42:18-25

וְהִעֲוִירִים תִּבְרִיטִי לְרֹאדֹת: <sup>18</sup>תִּחְרְשִׁים שְׁמָעִי

וְחִרַשׁ כַּמְלֶאכִי אֲשַׁלַּח <sup>19</sup>מִי עֹר כִּי אִם-עֲבָדִי

וְעֹר כְּעָבֵד יִהְיֶה: מִי עֹר כַּמְשָׁלָם

פְּקֹדֹת אֲזִנִּים וְלֹא יִשְׁמָע: <sup>20</sup>רָאִית רַבּוֹת וְלֹא תִשְׁמַר

בְּגִדֵּי־תוֹרָה וְבִאֲדָרִי:<sup>21</sup> יִהְיֶה חֶפֶץ לְמַעַן צִדְקוֹ  
 וְהָיָא עִם־בְּזוּז וְשִׁסּוּי<sup>22</sup>  
 וּבִבְחֵי כָּל־אִים וְחֻבָּאֵר  
 מִשְׁפָּחָה וְאִין־אִמֵּר הָשֵׁב:

בְּקוֹשֶׁב וְיִשְׁמַע לְאַחֲרֵי:<sup>23</sup> מִי בָכֶם נֹאזִין זֹאת  
 וְיִשְׁרָאֵל לְבִזְזִים<sup>24</sup> מִי־גִחַן לְמִשְׁפָּחָה יַעֲקֹב  
 הֲלֹא יִהְיֶה זֶה חֲטָאֵנוּ לֹא  
 וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּתוֹרָתוֹ:  
 אֲפֹר נַעֲזוּז מִלְחָמָה<sup>25</sup> בְּיִשְׁפֹּף עָלָיו חֲמָה  
 וְתִבְעֵר־בּוֹ וְלֹא־יָשִׁים עַל־לֵב:  
 וְתִלְחַמְּהוּ מִסָּבִיב וְלֹא יָדַע

<sup>18</sup> O deaf ones, listen!

And, O blind ones, pay attention and see!

<sup>19</sup> Who is blind except my servant?

And deaf like my messenger I shall send?

Who is blind like a dedicated one?<sup>13</sup>

And blind like the servant of YHWH?

<sup>20</sup> You have seen<sup>14</sup> much but you do not take heed;

<sup>13</sup> The meaning of כְּמִשְׁלָם is obscure (Elliger 1978: 271). Our translation (cf. Arabic cognate, *muslim*; Levy 1925:153) makes good sense in this context. Cf. NRSV.

<sup>14</sup> The *Ketiv* רָאִיתָ is supported by Q<sup>a</sup>, whereas the *Qere* רָאִיתָ, although supported by many Mss, is perhaps an improvement in order to make the word parallel to another infinitive absolute, פָּקִידָה.

Ears are open but he does not listen.

<sup>21</sup>YHWH has desired his victory,

He will make teaching great and glorious.

<sup>22</sup>But this was a people robbed and plundered,

Trapped in the dungeons, all of them,

And were hidden in houses of imprisonment.

They were like a spoil but without a deliverer,

A booty but without anyone saying, "Bring back!"

<sup>23</sup>Who among you will give ear to this,

Pay attention and listen hereafter?

<sup>24</sup>Who has given Jacob for plundering,<sup>15</sup>

And Israel to robbers?

Was it not YHWH, whom we sinned against?

And they were not willing to go in his way,

And they did not listen to his teaching;

<sup>25</sup>And he poured upon him heat,

His anger<sup>16</sup> and fierceness of battle;

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<sup>15</sup> The *Ketiv* לְמַשִּׁסָּה (Poel ptc) is supported by the ancient versions, but the *Qere* לְמַשָּׁסָה (for a plunder) is confirmed by לְמַשִּׁסָּה in Q<sup>a</sup>. Driver suggests two abstract nouns in v.24a: 'plundering' and 'robbery' (1958:47).

<sup>16</sup> Q<sup>a</sup> has חֲמַת אַפּוֹ (the heat of his anger) instead of מ' s חֲמַת אַפּוֹ (heat his anger), in which, as Watts (1987:126) quite rightly points out, there is an unclear grammatical relation between the two words. Despite the apparent support of the ancient versions for Q<sup>a</sup>,

And it set him ablaze all around but he did not know,  
And it burned him but he did not take it to heart.

Following the lead of Köhler (1923:111-120), Westermann distinguishes between two groups of trial speeches in Isaiah 40-55: 'on the one hand Yahweh and the nations (or their deities) stand against one another (for a trial), on the other hand Yahweh and Israel' (1964b:134). Westermann includes Isa 43:23-28; 50:1-3; and 42:18-25 as the only three examples of the trial speeches between YHWH and Israel, but he also discreetly places a question mark within brackets against the last text. In fact, he freely acknowledges that all three pericopae 'stand closely to the disputation speeches' (143), and subsequently in his commentary he agrees with Muilenburg (1956:476) that the use of the 'who' questions in Isa 42:18-25 indicates a close parallel with Isa 40:12ff; hence 'this suggests that the oracle is a disputation' (1966:90). Schoors (1973:202) is

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Orlinsky (1951) maintains that מׁ remains the more difficult reading. Moreover, he further argues that מׁ has never 'been used in construct to another word of similar meaning', but 'there are scores of passages, . . . where forms of מׁ are used in conjunction and in parallelism with אׁ' (153). Consequently, he proposes to redivide the verse, keeping the reading of מׁ and arriving at a more balanced meter.



therefore wrong to claim Westermann's support when he decides to defend Isa 42:18-25 as a trial speech instead of a disputation. Moreover, the identification of v.18 as the introductory summons to a trial by both Westermann and Schoors has been correctly criticized by Melugin (1976:41-42), who points out not only that Isa 42:18 is very different from other summons like 41:1, 21; and 43:8, but rather that imperatives similar to those in v.18 do occur in disputations such as 2Sam 20:16ff and Job 33:1, 31, and 33, where the speeches are 'designed to present an argument against an opposing view' (42,n.74). Furthermore, apart from the opening question of v.19a, the pericope refers to YHWH in the third person, and so it cannot be an *Appellationsrede* of YHWH defending himself against the accusation of Israel. Consequently, we are puzzled by Nielsen's decision (1978:70-71) in choosing Isa 42:18-25 as the sole example of the lawsuit in Deutero-Isaiah which 'deals with the relationship between Yahweh and Israel' (67).<sup>17</sup> As a contrast, we notice that Irons does

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<sup>17</sup> In her brief treatment of the passage, Nielsen has not explained why she considers this text as not just a dispute but further 'allude[s] to a trial procedure' (71). It is likely that she follows the conclusions of Schoors, who assigns all the four passages (Isa 41:1-5, 21-29; 43:8-13; and 42:18-25) discussed by Nielsen to the genre of trial speech.

not include this pericope at all in his Vanderbilt dissertation (1976), which sets out to conduct a form-critical study of all the trial speeches in Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>18</sup>

Both Westermann (1966:90) and Elliger (1978:279) draw attention to the series of 'who' questions (vv.19, 23, and 24a) dominating the entire pericope. After the opening call to listen (v.18), the disputation may be divided into two parts (vv.19-22 and 23-25), each of them beginning with the pair of 'who' questions. Judging from the parallel structure, we do not agree with most commentators that v.19b should be deleted as an interpolation. Whybray even describes it as 'extremely ugly by the canons of Hebrew poetic style' (1975:80), but the threefold repetition of the word עִוְר (blind) may be employed deliberately for the effect of emphasis. Moreover, there seems to be a gradual movement leading towards the final climactic question of v.24a, which is the only one among the four 'who' questions supplied with a direct answer by the prophet.

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<sup>18</sup> Irons (1976:49-52) lists Isa 41:1-5; 43:8-13; and 45:20-21 as examples of the 'plaintiff's appeal for legal action', 44:6-8 as a 'plaintiff's speech in court', 43:22-28 as a 'defendant's appeals for legal action', 50:1-3 as a 'defendant's speech in court', and 41:21-29 as a 'speech of the judge'.

Nevertheless, we must first examine the apparently rhetorical questions in v.19 as well as the meaning of 'blind' and 'deaf' in the first part, and at the same time evaluate if Elliger (1978:279) is correct in seeing two different themes, and hence two originally separate speeches, in the two pairs of 'who' questions, before coming to the main objective of the entire disputation as expressed in the second part.

It is commonly assumed that behind the rhetorical questions of v.19 lies Israel's charge of YHWH being 'blind' and 'deaf' to the suffering of his own people, and such an assumption is clearly based on the view that v.20 'can best explain the terms "blind" and "deaf" with which Israel is addressed' (Westermann 1966:91). However, outside Isa 42:18-20, the mentions of the blind and the deaf in both Isa 29:18 and 35:5 are positive declarations of salvation rather than negative condemnations of obstinacy. Moreover, both Isa 42:7 and 16 employ the imagery of blindness to depict the plight of prisoners held in dark dungeons, and the two passages clearly proclaim the deliverance of YHWH to his people in exile. Furthermore, if we read Isa 43:8 without the *a priori* conviction that 'blind' and 'deaf' must denote a rebellious attitude towards YHWH, it is not impossible, as we shall see in the next chapter, to understand there that YHWH is encouraging rather than reproaching his

people to become his witnesses. It is true that Clements draws attention to the significance of Isa 6:9-10, where the theme of Israel's blindness and deafness is clearly 'understood in a metaphorical and spiritual sense' (1985:102), and he goes on to suggest 'that the ironic terms of Isaiah's commission to render Israel blind and deaf have provided a convenient image with which to describe Israel living under judgment' (1988:194). Nevertheless, we do not think that subsequent passages concerning Israel's blindness and deafness must therefore be governed by this particular understanding only, especially when significant texts like Isa 42:7 and 16 are then to be regarded as exceptions (Clements 1988:193). In our view, it may just be the other way round. Because of the close proximity between Isa 42:18-20 and 42:7 & 16, and indeed the explicit references to Israel as a people 'trapped in the dungeons' and 'hidden in houses of imprisonment' in v.22, it seems to us that here the motif of Israel's blindness and deafness points in a primary sense to the people's captivity in exile.<sup>19</sup> Thus the prophet is

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<sup>19</sup> Clements is of the opinion that, 'from the time of their origin, the prophetic sayings of Isaiah 40-55 were intended as a supplement and sequel to a collection of the earlier sayings of the eighth-century Isaiah of Jerusalem' (1985:101). His view is keenly supported by Seitz, who, after a most recent re-examination of

addressing his own people, who are suffering from plundering and robbery under their enemies (vv.18 and 22). The tragic plight of the people (who is also the servant) is underlined by YHWH in v.19a and probably confirmed by the prophet himself again in v.19b. Yet the situation is aggravated by the fact that the people are also blind and deaf in a further sense, for they are unable to comprehend what is actually going on (v.20). The statement in v.20 is perhaps not so much a condemning rebuke but a lamenting regret. As a result, the point of disputation appears to be not whether YHWH or his servant is 'blind' and 'deaf', but why it is that

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Isa 36-39, promises 'a possible future study' detailing the evidence of '[t]he forward influence of the Hezekiah-Isaiah narratives [Isa 36-39] on chapters 40-55' and 'with a view toward determining whether this material [Isa 40-55] was composed, from its inception, in response to First Isaiah prophecies' (1991:194-197). The scholarly debate, however, is far from being conclusive. Both Sweeney and O'Kane have likewise focused their investigations on Isa 1-4 and 28-33 respectively, but they come up with the opposite conclusion that Isa 1-39 are completed after Isa 40-55 (Sweeney 1988:185 & O'Kane 1989:426, who refer to earlier studies of Lack 1973:142 and Rendtorff 1986:198-200). While it is not our intention to join in the discussion at large, our disagreement with Clements over the understanding of the theme of Israel's blindness and deafness may apparently take away one significant exegetical support of his general thesis.

the servant who is called 'to open blind eyes / to bring out prisoners from the dungeon' (42:7) is himself blind and deaf, and why the people are apparently without a deliverer if YHWH is the mighty warrior who promises to guide the blind people on a new way (42:13 and 16). In other words, if indeed 'YHWH has desired his victory', why has Israel become 'a people robbed and plundered' (v.21-22)?

Thus the second pair of 'who' questions bring the discussion one step further from the first part of the disputation; they do not lead to a different subject-matter. V.23 reiterates the exhortation of v.18, encouraging the people to see and listen despite their apparent blindness and deafness. V.24 then goes on to tackle the fundamental question, 'Who has given Jacob for plundering / And Israel to robbers?' The answer categorically points to YHWH and none other being responsible for the exile, which therefore must not be mistaken as the consequence of YHWH's defeat by the foreign deities. But the answer does not stop here; it further brings out the reason for the exile to be Israel's sin and rebellion in the past. The descriptions in v.24b-25 clearly refer back to what has happened before the exile and not the contemporary scene of the proclamation of the prophet, for in the following pericope the prophet immediately announces an oracle of

salvation beginning with ~~תָּיִן~~ (but now). Although the fact of Israel sinning against YHWH is mentioned, the main concern of the disputation is never to continue condemning the people. The prophet tries to explain the discrepancy between YHWH's intention and the people's reality, and that is why he must refer to their sinful past. But now he is being sent to speak comforting words to Israel; hence in this disputation he defends YHWH's faithfulness (v.21), and urges his people to 'see' and 'listen' despite their being 'blind' and 'deaf' because of the exile (vv.18 and 23).

Once again we observe the theme of YHWH's sovereign power and absolute control underlying even the discussion of his judgement over the people of Israel as well as his faithfulness and commitment to help them. Israel suffers not because of YHWH's lack of power or loss of control, but rather it is the consequence of divine anger (v.25). Since YHWH is the sovereign one 'who has given Jacob for plundering / and Israel to robbers', he is also the one who has the authority to act as their deliverer and to say, 'Bring back!' The pericope of Isa 42:18-25 clearly belongs to the second group of disputations between the prophet and his audience over YHWH's faithfulness; it is not a trial speech between YHWH and his own people Israel.

כי-דָּבַעַתָּ בִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל:	<sup>22</sup> וְלֹא-אֶתִי קָרָאתָ בְּעֶקֶב
וְזָבַחְתִּיךָ לֹא כִבְדָתִנִּי	<sup>23</sup> לֹא-הִבִּיאָתָּ לִי שֶׁחַ עֲלֵתִיךָ
וְלֹא הִזְבַּעְתִּיךָ בְּלִבְוִנָה:	לֹא הִעֲבַדְתִּיךָ בְּמִנְחָה
וְחִלָּב זָבַחְתִּיךָ לֹא הִרְוִיתִנִּי	<sup>24</sup> לֹא-קָנִיתָ לִי בַכֶּסֶף קָנָה
הִזְבַּעְתִּנִּי בַעֲוֹנוֹתֶיךָ:	אֵף הִעֲבַדְתִּנִּי בְּחַטָּאוֹתֶיךָ
מִנְחָה פִּשְׁעֶיךָ לְמַעַנִּי	<sup>25</sup> אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא
וְחַטָּאוֹתֶיךָ לֹא אֶזְכֹּר:	
סֶפֶר אֶתָּה לְמַעַן תִּצְדָּק:	<sup>26</sup> תִּזְכִּירְנִי בְשִׁפְטָה יָחִיד
וּמִלִּיצֶיךָ פִּשְׁעֵי בִּי:	<sup>27</sup> אֲבִירָךָ תִּרְאֶשׁוֹן חֲטָא
וְאֶתָּנָה לַחֲרָם בְּעֶקֶב	<sup>28</sup> וְאֶחָלָל שָׁרִי קֹדֶשׁ
וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְגִדּוּפִים:	

<sup>22</sup> But not me did you call, O Jacob!

For you were weary of me, O Israel! [offerings,

<sup>23</sup> You did not bring me the sheep of your burnt-  
Or your sacrifices - you did not honour me.

I did not enslave you with grain offering,

And I did not make you weary with frankincense.

<sup>24</sup> You did not acquire calamus for me with silver,  
And your sacrifices' fat - you did not satisfy me.

In fact you enslaved me with your sins,

You made me weary with your transgressions.

<sup>25</sup> I, I am he,

Who blots out your rebellions for my own sake,



And your sins I shall not remember.

<sup>26</sup>Remind me! Let us plead together!

Recount! You - so that you may be vindicated!

<sup>27</sup>Your first father sinned,

And your mediators rebelled against me,

<sup>28</sup>And I profaned princes of holiness,

And I gave<sup>20</sup> Jacob to the ban,

And Israel to revilings.

As Schoors observes, the delimitation of the pericope is marked by the inclusion 'Jacob-Israel' in vv.22 and 28 (1973:190). In addition, it is held together by words like *הִגִּיעַ/יָּבַע* (vv.22b, 23b, and 24b), *חֲטָא/חֲטָאת* (vv.24b, 25b, and v.27a), and *פָּשַׁע/פְּשָׁעֶיךָ* (vv.25a and 27b).

The pericope is usually classified by form-critics as an *Appellationsrede* (an appeal-to-trial speech) between YHWH and his people Israel.<sup>21</sup> The appeal

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<sup>20</sup> Following Ⓢ, Ⓞ, Ⓟ, and *לֹאֲתָן* in Ⓐ, we propose to repoint *תָּ* to *תָּ* in Ⓜ. But Ⓡ apparently follows Ⓜ in using the future tense.

<sup>21</sup> See for example, Begrich (1963:31-33), Boecker (1964: 54-56), Westermann (1964b:141-143, 1966:106-109), Schoors (1973:189-197), Elliger (1978:365-368), Melugin (1976:48-50), and Irons (1976:49-52).

of the accused for a decision at a trial is found in the middle (v.26), while the accusation raised by Israel against YHWH is contained at the very end (v.28). Thus Westermann (1966:107) thinks that the trial speech proper begins only at v.26, and is prefaced by a disputation. However, he hastens to add that the summons to court never materializes,<sup>22</sup> for the accusations are reversed, and therefore the trial becomes unnecessary. Moreover, Westermann never denies the fact that the entire pericope is closely akin to a disputation (1964b:144 and 1966:107). On the other hand, based on 1Sam 24:10ff and Judg 11:12ff, Melugin proposes a four-part structure for 'an appeal-to-trial speech of the accused'. Here in Isa 43:22-28, while the 'reproving questions concerning the accusation' are missing, the 'assertion of innocence' may be found in vv.22-24a, the counter-accusations in vv.24b and 27-28, and the call for a trial in v.26. But Melugin thinks that the pericope is only 'an imitation of the customary form', because 'the emphatic statement of Yahweh's mercy in v.25 would have no place in a real legal proceeding'

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<sup>22</sup> In his earlier essay published prior to his commentary, Westermann suggests that the passage is 'not an actual trial speech, but rather a pre-trial contest' (1964b:142). Elliger also agrees that the pericope's *Sitz im Leben* is 'not in the trial hearing itself, but in some situation which precedes it' (1978:366).

(1976:48). That is perhaps the reason why he finds it impossible to fit the verse into his proposed form.

In our opinion, the pericope is better considered to be a disputation than a trial speech for the following three reasons. First of all, if the entire debate takes place outside a court setting and renders a subsequent trial unnecessary, must it still be labelled 'a speech of appeal'? After all, the disputation within the passage is easily recognized, whereas the alleged accusation of Israel against YHWH can only be deduced. Secondly, YHWH's affirmation of his forgiveness in v.25 is entirely out of place within an *Appellationsrede*, but as the concluding climax of vv.22-25 and the transition between vv.22-25 and 26-28, the verse is too significant to be relegated to the sideline. While it makes little sense in an alleged trial speech, it may in fact be the focal point of a disputation. Thirdly, as Hermisson (1992:212) points out, there is a close affinity between Isa 43:22-28 and 48:1-11 because of the emphasis on YHWH acting 'for my own sake' (לְמַעַנִי; 43:25 and 48:11). As a result, it seems to us that the present pericope belongs more appropriately to the group of disputations over YHWH's faithfulness towards his people Israel.

The contrast between YHWH and Israel is clearly drawn out in the first part of the disputation

(vv.22-25). YHWH has not enslaved his people nor made them weary with the various offerings; actually it is Israel who has enslaved YHWH and made him weary with her sins and transgressions. Moreover, while Israel has sinned and rebelled against her God, YHWH is the one who does not remember the sins of his people and blots out their rebellions. Furthermore, YHWH's forgiveness is offered because of his faithfulness and grace; it has nothing to do with Israel's sacrifices to her God. In the second part of the disputation (vv.26-28), it is being further pointed out that the sins and rebellions of Israel had not only rendered all her offerings meaningless, they also resulted in YHWH punishing his people with defeat and exile. However, the purpose of the disputation is not to focus on the dire consequence of Israel's failure, but rather to draw attention to YHWH's readiness to forgive and to help Israel. Thus the following pericope again begins with וְעַתָּה (but now) and continues with the announcement of divine salvation for the people (Isa 44:1-8).

### 3.7 Isaiah 50:1-3

	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה <sup>01</sup>
אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתִּיהָ	אִי זֶה סֹפֵר כְּרִיתוֹת אֲמַכֶּם
אֲשֶׁר-מִכַּרְתִּי אֲתֶכֶם לֹו	אוֹ מִי מְגוֹשִׁי
וּבִפְשָׁעֵיכֶם שְׁלַחָה אֲמַכֶּם:	הֵן בְּעֹלְבֵיכֶם נִמְכַּרְתֶּם

קראתי ואין עונה	<sup>02</sup> מדוע באתי ואין איש
ואם-אין-בי כח להציל	הקצור קצרה ידי מפרות
אשים נהרות מדבר	הן בגערתי אחריב ים
ותמת בצמא:	תבאש דגתם מאין מים
ושק אשים בסותם:	<sup>03</sup> אל-ביש שמים קהרות

<sup>01</sup> Thus said YHWH:

Where is the writ of divorce of your mother,

With which I sent her away?

Or which of my creditors is it,

To whom I sold you?

Look! By your transgressions you were sold,

And by your rebellions your mother was sent away.

<sup>02</sup> Why did I come but there was nobody,

Did I call but none answered?

Is my hand really too short for a ransom?

And is there no power in me to deliver?

Look! By my rebuke I dry up Sea,

I turn floods into a desert;

Their fish stink from lack of water,

And die because of thirst.

<sup>03</sup> I clothe heavens with gloom,

And I set sackcloth to be their covering.

The present pericope falls into two halves

(v.1 and vv.2 & 3); each consists of the questions of dispute and YHWH's response introduced by וְהִנֵּה (Look!). The first two questions in v.1a expect the answer that there is in fact no writ of divorce, nor is there any creditor. The argument seems to be over the more important issue of YHWH's control over Israel and not just the alleged accusation of YHWH having deserted his own people.<sup>23</sup> The absence of the writ of divorce implies that a second marriage has not yet taken place, and it remains legal for the husband to take back his wife whom he has sent away. On the other hand, YHWH is not in the helpless situation where he must sell his children to repay his creditors. The exile of Israel occurs as a result of the people's rebellions against YHWH (v.1b), and not because of YHWH being compelled to give them up.

The disputation carries on in the second half of the divine speech. V,2aa is often taken by form-critics to indicate the *Sitz im Leben* of a legal trial, but in that case it is often artificially

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<sup>23</sup> Pace Begrich (1963:38), who suggests that this is a speech of a man accused by his sons of having repudiated their mother and sold themselves. Among others, Westermann (1964b:143) and Schoors (1973:198) follow closely the interpretation of Begrich.

disjoined from the second question in v.2a $\beta$ .<sup>24</sup> In our opinion, the two consecutive questions must be interpreted together, just like the two opening questions of the first half of the pericope. The issue here is YHWH's 'power to deliver' (כֹּחַ לְתַצִּיל). The people of Israel are so pragmatic that in fact it is they who have refused to pay homage to YHWH (v.2a) when they think he is unable to help. YHWH refutes this wrong impression by appealing to his power manifest in the first Exodus (v.2b and 3).<sup>25</sup> Moreover, there is also an implicit reference to the motif of *Chaoskampf* in the mentioning of יָם (Sea), which stands for the deity of chaos waters known to us through the Ugaritic mythology.

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<sup>24</sup> Schoors' defence (1973:198) of the legal terminology is persuasive, but the overall structure of the pericope rules out the possibility that v.2a $\alpha$  belongs to v.1.

<sup>25</sup> The parallel texts of Pss 106:7; 107:33; Exod 7:18f; 8:10; and Nah 1:4 suggested by Schoors (1973:199) are convincing, but whether v.3 refers to the plague of darkness is not clear. As a further illustration of YHWH's power, an allusion to the divine theophany may also be appropriate. On the other hand, Gunn argues persuasively for 'the probability of multiple allusion, perhaps primarily this time to the exodus but with strong overtones of the flood as well' (1975:501).

Thus Melugin (1976:52) is probably correct when he suggests that the pericope of Isa 50:1-3 is in fact a disputation speech containing imitated trial language. Nevertheless, it is important for us to recognize that the purpose of the divine speech again is to affirm YHWH's continuous control and saving power over his people rather than to condemn the sins and rebellions of Israel. In this last disputation pericope in Isaiah 40-55, we witness once more the strong presence of the theme of YHWH's sovereignty (vv.2 & 3) in the argument for his faithfulness towards Israel (v.1).

### 3.8 Summary

We may now summarize the results of our examination of this second group of six disputations into the following three significant observations:

Firstly, all six pericopae (Isa 42:18-25; 43:22-28; 48:1-11, 12-26; 49:14-21; and 50:1-3) share the same theme of YHWH's faithfulness towards his people in spite of Israel's sins and rebellions. The so-called trial speeches (42:18-25; 43:22-28; and 50:1-3) between YHWH and Israel are better taken to be disputations as well, for their *Sitz im Leben* cannot be established as within that of a trial in court. It is in fact more



appropriate to classify the six passages together as a second group of disputations which do not tackle directly the theme of YHWH's sovereignty, but rather his faithfulness in contrast to Israel faithlessness.

Secondly, these six pericopae also share the same disputational purpose of arguing for YHWH's intention to help his people in exile, even though the exile has been a consequence of his judgement over Israel's past transgressions. Thus it is important to recognize that the disputations are designed to encourage and not to condemn. The motif of Israel's blindness and deafness must be understood primarily as a reference to the people's oppression, and only secondarily as an allusion to their obstinacy. That is why even when they are called blind and deaf, the prophet still urges his people to see and listen (42:18 and 23). Israel in exile indeed finds it hard to be convinced of YHWH's intention to save, but what they need is clearly not rebuke but comfort. It is also our reason for labelling this group of disputations as about YHWH's faithfulness and not Israel's sinfulness.

Thirdly, we have observed in Isa 48:12-16; 42:18-25; and 50:1-3 the clear presence of the theme of YHWH's sovereignty in the argument for his faithfulness. In 49:14-21 the same theme is found in the two pericopae

surrounding it. In 48:1-11 and 43:22-28 the sovereign will of YHWH may also be located implicitly in the assertion that he will forgive Israel for his own sake. Although the motifs of creation and salvation do not play as prominent a role in this second group of disputations as in the first group, the theme of YHWH's sovereign power and supreme control remains a foundation of the prophet's exhortation for his people to trust in the faithfulness of YHWH.

We have thus far found Dijkstra's distinction between a first group of disputations on YHWH's uniqueness and a second group of disputations on Israel's failure in the past very useful. Nevertheless, we are reluctant to follow him any further in denying any distinction between the disputations and the trial speeches (Dijkstra 1980:437). In the following chapter, we shall examine four pericopae which in our opinion can be clearly defined as trial speeches.

## CHAPTER 4

### TRIAL SPEECHES

#### 4.1 Introduction

In his analysis of the trial speeches in Isaiah 40-55, Irons (1976:47) proposes three criteria for the delineation of this specific form.<sup>1</sup> To begin with, a common motif such as the summons to court or the procedures of a trial will help to identify a pericope as a trial speech. Thus Irons finds in Isa 41:1-5; 43:8-13; and 45:20-21 common features indicating that all of them are the plaintiff's appeals for legal action, while he classifies Isa 41:21-29 to be the speech of a judge (49-52). Secondly, some conventional formulae or a traditional structure may also contribute to the recognition of a trial speech, but unfortunately

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<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the more general discussion of the prophetic genre of 'trial speech', see Schoors (1973:176-188) and Nielsen (1978:5-26).

Irons concludes that there is in fact no formula which offers a completely satisfactory means of identification (99). Finally, Irons follows the example of many other form-critics in trying to establish the *Sitz im Leben* of these passages in the daily legal life of ancient Israel (100). As a result, despite the lack of an easily recognizable structure, the trial speeches can still be identified as a distinctive genre in Isaiah 40-55.

Melugin's examination (1976:53-63) of the trial speeches between YHWH and the nations in Isaiah 40-55 has led him to question whether it is appropriate to try to postulate the *Sitz im Leben* of this particular genre within the legal or cultic life of ancient Israel. Begrich (1963:27) suggests that these trial speeches of Deutero-Isaiah mirror the various forms of legal speeches used in the city gate. But Melugin quickly points out that 'the non-Deutero-Isaianic trial speeches discussed by Begrich have to do with violation of the established order', while 'Deutero-Isaiah's speeches involving Yahweh and the nations or their gods reflect rival claims to deity' (53). Hence the trial speeches of Deutero-Isaiah do not anticipate a usual verdict of 'guilty' or 'innocent', nor do they demand a restitution of rights which have been violated. 'Instead, the court determines which of the opposing parties has proved the validity of his assertion' (54). On the other hand, von

Waldow's proposal (1953:37-47) that the trial speeches between YHWH and the nations are imitations of speech-forms employed in the cult has many difficulties. One major difference between the two lies in the fact that in the cult, YHWH's sovereignty as judge over Israel and the nations is never questioned, whereas here in Deutero-Isaiah 'the trial is called to determine whether or not Yahweh is God; the possibility that he might not be sovereign is indeed taken seriously' (55). As a result, Melugin agrees with Westermann (1964b:134-141) that '[a] trial to determine whether or not Yahweh is God has no *Sitz im Leben* in Israel', and that the new form of speech is a literary creation by the prophet 'as a response to the need to convince doubting Israel that the emergence of the pagan Cyrus was to be understood as a new event in Israel's salvation history' (57).

In this chapter, we shall discuss four pericopae, namely, Isa 41:1-7, 21-29; 43:8-15; and 45:20-25, which are identified as trial speeches between YHWH and the nations. We shall attempt to establish the common features characteristic to a trial speech as well as to explore further the question of its *Sitz im Leben*. It is also our intention to examine the underlying theme of these trial speeches and in particular its relationship to the motifs of creation and redemption.

4.2 Isaiah 41:1-7

<sup>01</sup>תִּתְּרִישׁוּ אֵלַי אֲדִים  
וְגִשׁוּ אֵז וְדַבְּרוּ  
וְלְאֲדָמִים הִתְלִיפוּ כֹחַ  
וְתִדְּרוּ לְמַשְׁפָּט בְּקִרְבָּהּ:

<sup>02</sup>מִי הָעִיר מִמִּזְרַח  
וְתֵן לְפָנָיו גּוֹיִם  
וְתֵן בְּעַפְרֵהּ חֲרָבוֹ  
<sup>03</sup>וְרִדְפֶם וְעֲבוֹר שְׁלוֹם  
צֶדֶק וְקִרְאָהּ לְרִגְלוֹ  
וּמַלְכִּים בְּרִדָּהּ  
בְּקֶשׁ גִּדְּף קִשְׁתּוֹ:  
אֲכַח בְּרִגְלָיו לֹא יָבוֹא:

<sup>04</sup>מִי-פָעַל וְעָשָׂה  
אֲבִי יִהְיֶה רֹאשׁוֹן  
קָרָא תְּדַרְדֹּר מִרֹּאשׁ  
וְאֶת-אַחֲרָנִים אֲבִי-הוּא:

<sup>05</sup>רְאוּ אֲדִים וַיִּירָאוּ  
קִרְבוּ נִיגְאָתָיוֹן:  
וְלֹא-חֲיוּ יֹאמַר תִּזְק:  
מִתְּלִיךְ פִּטְיֹשׁ אֶת-הוּלָם פַּעַם  
קָצוֹת הָאָרֶץ הִתְרַדּוּ  
אִישׁ אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ וַעֲזָרוּ  
וַיִּתְּזֶק תִּרְשׁ אֶת-צִרְיָהּ  
אֲמַר לְדָבֶק טוֹב הוּא  
וַיִּתְּזֶקְהוּ בְּמִסְמָרִים לֹא יִמוּט:  
<sup>06</sup>  
<sup>07</sup>

<sup>01</sup>Be silent before me, coastlands,  
And let peoples renew power;  
Let them approach, then let them speak,  
Together for the judgement let us come near.

<sup>02</sup>Who has roused from the East,

One victory will call wherever he turns?<sup>2</sup>  
 He will deliver before him nations,  
 And kings he will subdue.  
 He will deliver like dust (by) his sword,  
 Like driven chaff (by) his bow;  
<sup>03</sup>He will pursue them, he will pass by (in) peace,  
 He will not travel a path on his feet.  
  
<sup>04</sup>Who has worked and made,  
 Calling the generations from beginning?  
 I am YHWH, I am first,  
 And with those coming after, I am he.  
  
<sup>05</sup>Coastlands have seen and will fear,  
 The ends of the earth will be terrified.  
 They have drawn near and come,  
<sup>06</sup>Each his neighbour they will help:  
 And to his brother he will say, 'Be strong!'  
<sup>07</sup>A craftsman strengthened a goldsmith;  
 He who flattens with a hammer him who smites an anvil,  
 Saying of the riveting, 'It is good!'  
 And he strengthened it with nails - it may  
 not be shaken.

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<sup>2</sup> לְרַגְלוֹ literally means 'to his foot', but with reference to Gen 30:30, it appears to be an idiom meaning 'wherever one turns'.

The pericope begins with a summons issued by YHWH to the coastlands and peoples. That it is a summons to court for a legal trial is made explicit by the word לְמִשְׁפָּט (for the judgement) in v.1b $\beta$ . Within such a context, the preceding clause יִתְּלִיפוּ כֹחַ (let them renew power) of v.1a $\beta$  is often considered out of place and explained by dittography from 40:31a $\alpha$  (Elliger 1978:104-105). Nevertheless,  $\mathfrak{M}$  is supported by all the ancient versions and  $\mathfrak{Q}^a$ , not to mention that the clause also appears to play a key role in linking this passage to the on-going motif of power, and must of course be understood in an ironic sense (Torrey 1928:313, Janzen 1983:431-434). The other emendation (North 1964:91, Westermann 1966:53,n.1) which suggests taking v.5b to be the misplaced missing clause of v.1a $\beta$  has actually left v.6a without its counterpart. A more subtle point, however, has to do with the change of persons. The summons begins with the coastlands as the addressees, but the following two stichs immediately refer to them in the third person. There is no warrant for the readers to assume a separate identity between the 'coastlands' and the 'peoples', nor is there an apparent contradiction between the commands to be silent and to speak (hence the need for two separate groups to which these two commands are issued respectively), if they are taken as referring to the sequential procedures at the



beginning of the trial. So why are these peoples being addressed as 'they', and who, if any, is supposed to be the one YHWH will address as 'you'? Moreover, what does the final word of v.1, **נִקְרְבָה** (let us come near), include, apart from YHWH himself, when it says 'us'? It appears as if there is nobody else but YHWH and these 'peoples', yet we must wait and see.

The pericope continues with the question introduced by **מִי** (who) and an extended elaboration on the meaning of the word **צִדֵּק**, which, as Skinner (1917:18) quite correctly argues, belongs 'both metrically and by the Hebrew accentuation' to the second half of the sentence of v.2a, and hence cannot be treated as the object to the verb **הָעִיר** (roused). On the whole, vv.2 and 3 are difficult, and we have the impression that all the ancient versions as well as the modern commentators are apparently guessing, and, in various instances, have to resort to paraphrasing.<sup>3</sup> Despite such uncertainties over details, the overall picture nevertheless remains relatively clear, and it is possible to distinguish between the actions in v.2a and bα as being divine and those in vv.2bβ and 3 human (Eitan 1937:75). This is

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<sup>3</sup> See Schoors (1973:209-212) for the various possibilities of interpreting v.2, and Ap-Thomas (1967:45-55) for v.3.

precisely the reason why Elliger's opinion (1978:120) that the word צִדִּיק in Isaiah 40-55 always means *Heil* and not *Sieg* or *Erfolg* must be deemed too fine a distinction. Judging from the text, we cannot but come to the conclusion that here צִדִּיק must include both divine and human victories, for, as Westermann points out, the change of subject in the middle of vv.2-3 'expresses the way in which the divine and the human action are here conjoined' (1966:55). It is not to deny the close affinity between צִדִּיק and the motif of divine salvation in Isaiah 40-55, but perhaps 'victory' is a better translation of this Hebrew word, which is exceptionally rich in its meanings.<sup>4</sup>

The 'who' question is repeated in v.4 with an expanded focus from a specific occasion to a general statement of power and sovereignty over all historical events, and the pericope reaches its climax in YHWH's self-predication, which not only answers categorically the 'who' question posed twice before, but also identifies him to be the one speaking and presiding over the trial. The phrase אֲנִי הוּא (I am he) echoes both the very conspicuous interrogative מִי as well as the easily

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<sup>4</sup> See Schmid (1968), Reiterer (1976), and Weinfeld (1985) for a thorough discussion of צִדִּיק in both the contexts of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East.

neglected pronominal suffix in אֵלַי at the beginning of v.1. On the other hand, although the two verbs עָשָׂה וַעֲשֶׂה (worked and made) in v.4aa apparently belong to the group of creation vocabulary, it is not obvious that here the creation of the world is being alluded to. The 'calling' of the generations is more like an expansion of the single event in which victory 'calls' the person whom YHWH has roused up than an implicit reference to the first creation. However, they are words carrying undoubtedly the nuance of power and authority, for as a response to this rhetorical challenge in v.4a, YHWH declares himself to be in a position of commanding what has happened before as well as what is going to happen next (v.4b).

Strictly speaking, the trial speech ends with the self-predication of YHWH in v.4b. Nevertheless, Melugin is right when he insists that vv.5-7 'are integral to the structure and intention of the poem' (1976:93). The epilogue to the trial speech carries the mockery one step further than the ironic summons to 'renew power' (v.1a), and describes how the nations respond in fear and terror, 'desperately encouraging each other as in futility they manufacture gods who cannot hold firm unless they are made secure by hapless men' (*ibid.*).

Our brief examination of this first trial speech between YHWH and the nations results in the following observations. First of all, the divine speech clearly implies the context of a trial. Secondly, the divine speech contains three distinct elements; namely, a summons to speak before the court, a central question introduced by מִי which highlights the point of dispute, and finally YHWH's self-predication as the definitive judgement. Thirdly, there is an epilogue attached to the trial speech giving in contrast a picture of the nations caught in fear and helplessness. But in order to find out more about the specific *Sitz im Leben* of the trial and all the parties involved, we must move on to the other three trial speeches as well.

#### 4.3 Isaiah 41:21-29

יֹאמֶר יְהוָה	קִרְבוּ רִיבְכֶם <sup>21</sup>
יֹאמֶר מִלֵּךְ יַעֲקֹב:	תְּגִישׁוּ עֲצָמוֹתֵיכֶם

אֵת אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרִינָה	יְגִישׁוּ וַיִּגִּדּוּ לָנוּ <sup>22</sup>
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תִּרְאֶשְׁנוּ מֶה תֵּבָה  
 תִּגִּדּוּ וְנִשְׁמָחָה לִבֵּנוּ  
 וְנִדְעָה אֲחִירֵינוּ  
 אוֹ תִבְאֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם:  
 תִּגִּדּוּ תִאֲתִיּוֹת לְאַחֵר<sup>23</sup>  
 וְנִדְעָה כִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם

וְנִשְׁתַּעַב וְנִבְרָא יְחִידוֹ:  
תוֹעֵבָה וּבְחַר בָּכֶם:

אֶף-תִּיטִיבוּ וְתִרְעוּ  
הֵן-אַתֶּם מֵאִין וּפְעֻלְכֶם מֵאִפֶּע

מִמְזִרְח־שֶׁמֶשׁ וּקְרָא בְשִׁמִּי  
וּכְמוֹ יוֹצֵר יִרְמֶס-טִיט:  
וּמִלְפָּנִים וְנֹאמַר צְדִיק

תַּעֲרֹוּתִי מִצָּפוֹן נִיֵּאת<sup>25</sup>  
וְיִבֵּא סִגְנִים כְּמוֹ-חֶמֶר  
מִי-הַגִּיד מֵרֹאשׁ וּבִדְעָה<sup>26</sup>

אֶף אִין-מִגִּיד  
אֶף אִין מִשְׁמִיעַ  
אֶף אִין-שֹׁמֵעַ אֲמֹרֵיכֶם:

וְלִירוּשָׁלַם מִבֶּשֶׁר אֶתָּן:

רֵאשׁוֹן לְצִיּוֹן הִנֵּה הִנֵּה<sup>27</sup>  
וְאֶרֶא וְאִין אִישׁ<sup>28</sup>  
וּמֵאֵלָה וְאִין יוֹעֵץ  
וְאֶשְׁאַלֵם וְיִשִּׁיבוּ דָבָר:

רוּחַ יְהוָה נִסְכִּיהֶם:

הֵן כָּלֵם אֶזֶן אֶפֶס מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Submit your case,

Says YHWH;

Bring near your arguments,

Says the king of Jacob.

<sup>22</sup> Let them bring near and declare to us

Things that happen:

The former things - what were they?

Declare that we may set our heart,

That we may know their end;

Or the coming things make us hear!

<sup>23</sup> Declare the things to come hereafter,

That we may know indeed you are gods.

In fact, do anything good or bad,

That we may be afraid<sup>5</sup> and fear<sup>6</sup> together.

<sup>24</sup> Look! You are less than nothing, and your work is less

An abomination he chooses you. [than nil;<sup>7</sup>

<sup>25</sup> I roused from the North and he has come,

From the East<sup>8</sup> he will call on my name;

And he treads down prefects like clay,

And like a potter he tramples mud.

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<sup>5</sup> M understood וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה as *Hithpa'el* of שָׁחָה (to gaze), but it is more likely to be *Qal* of שָׁחָה (to be afraid), which in Ugaritic (tt<sup>c</sup>) is parallel to yr<sup>c</sup> (to fear). The word also appears in the Phoenician Karatepe Inscription; see North (1964:96).

<sup>6</sup> The *Qere* וְנִרְאָה ('and we may see'; from the root רָאָה) is obviously influenced by the understanding of וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה to mean 'and we may gaze'. Our translation follows the *Ketiv* וְנִירָא ('and we may fear', from the root יָרָא). Cf. Isa 41:10, where אֱלֹהֵי-תִירָא is parallel to אֱלֹהֵי-תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה.

<sup>7</sup> מִאֲפֶס is a *hapax* and is probably a textual error for מִאֲפֶס. *BHS* cites 3 and v.29 as support, and Levy (1925:141) points to Isa 40:17 for comparison. Boadt, however, wonders if 'the lack of *samekhs* in this line, and the strong 'ayin alliteration potential may have suggested to the poet a rarer form of the word that meant the same as 'epes.' (1983:360).

<sup>8</sup> מִמִּזְרַח-שֶׁמֶשׁ literally means 'from sunrise'.

<sup>26</sup>Who has declared from beginning that we may know?

And in advance that we shall say victorious?

In fact none declares,

In fact none makes heard,

In fact none hears your sayings.

<sup>27</sup>(I was) the first (to say) to Zion, 'Look! Look at

And to Jerusalem a herald I give. [them!']

<sup>28</sup>And I look, but there is no one,

And from these, but there is no advisor,

And I ask them, that they may answer a word.

<sup>29</sup>Look! All of them are evil, empty are their deeds;

Wind and chaos are their statues.

The pericope begins again with a summons to trial from YHWH, and the trial speech falls subsequently into two parts (vv.22-24 and 25-29). Although עֲצֻמֹתֵיכֶם in v.21b is a *hapax*, its parallel רִיבְכֶם in v.21a clearly points to the context of a legal trial.

The first half of the trial speech elaborates on the summons of YHWH. The addressees, presumably the deities of the nations, are repeatedly challenged to substantiate their claim of divinity (v.23a $\beta$ ). Vv.22b and 23a balance each other neatly,<sup>9</sup> if

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<sup>9</sup> Pace BHS. Its suggestion of transposing the last two clauses of v.22 destroys consequently the balancing

we begin the latter verse from the very last clause of the former:

1A.	v.22ba	קְרָאֲשָׁנוֹת	(The former things)
1B.	v.22bβ	הִגִּידוּ	(Declare)
1C.	v.22by	וְנִדְעָה	(That we may know)
2A.	v.22bδ	הַבָּאוֹת	(The coming things)
2B.	v.23aα	הִגִּידוּ	(Declare)
2C.	v.23aβ	וְנִדְעָה	(That we may know)

From the above analysis it is clear that YHWH has challenged these deities to declare both the former things and the coming things. Thus it seems to us that the word **הִגִּיד** (to declare) cannot be understood to mean 'to predict' within the passage. It does not make any sense if the deities are asked to 'predict' 'the former things' which has already occurred; nor can anyone be certain whether the predictions are true (hence the predictor is indeed divine) before 'the coming things' actually take place. The act of declaration points towards the power of command and control. These deities are unable to declare or announce anything either in the past or in the future, and they cannot even do anything good or bad (v.23ba). The focus of the argument is not whether they can accurately 'predict' any happening, but rather if they are powerful enough to perform any act

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structure of these two verses.



which may prove that they are divine, 'that we may be afraid and fear together' (v.23b $\beta$ ). The conclusion in v.24 also puts emphasis on the reasoning that because their 'work' is nil (and not because their 'predictions' are wrong), these deities are in fact nothing. It is thus interesting to note that 'the gods of the nations are tangibly there, in front of Yahweh before he calls them "nothing"' (Gibson 1989:47). The deities of the conquerors must be an awesome reality for the people of Israel, and it is not so much their existence but their powerlessness that is the focus of the trial speech.

The second half of the trial speech begins with YHWH's declaration that he has raised up a conqueror (v.25), and it continues to ask, 'Who (מִי) has declared (הִגִּיד). . .that we may know?' (v.26a $\alpha$ .) The fact that none of the deities has been able to declare or announce anything is once again underlined (v.26a $\beta$ ), followed by the contrasting statement of YHWH sending a herald to Jerusalem (v.27ba). The first half of v.27 is a *crux interpretum*.<sup>10</sup> But even if v.27a remains

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<sup>10</sup> See Elliger (1978:174-175). McEleneny argues that v.27 'should be understood as the quotation of what the gods' "words" referred to in the previous verse' (1957:442), and Whitley's emendation of v.27a, הִגִּידִי לְצִיּוֹן מִרְאשׁוֹן (From beginning to Zion I declared), although attractive, looks like improving the text. ¶ is

ambiguous, we may still be in a position to follow the argument from the second half of the verse. YHWH has sent a messenger to Jerusalem, and hence he is distinguished from these so-called deities which are no more than empty statues (vv.28-29).

Our analysis of this trial speech confirms that it contains the three elements of the summons to court, the question introduced by מִי, and YHWH's proclamation that only he is in sovereign control of all historical events. In this particular pericope, the deities are challenged on their divinity and subsequently condemned as powerless. Therefore, apart from YHWH and the nations, there are these deities present at the trial. But it is interesting to note that although in the first half they are addressed in the second person, towards the end of the speech they are once again referred to in the third person. There seems to be yet another important party to whom the trial speech is being directed, but their presence remains very much in the background.

This second trial speech also reveals that the point of dispute is not simply who has roused up

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perhaps idiomatic rather than corrupt.

Cyrus, but rather who is really in control of past and future happenings and thus is powerful enough to be worthy of a divine title. As we have noted before, Westermann is correct when he insists that such a trial to determine the validity of divine claims of YHWH and the deities of the nations has no *Sitz im Leben* in Israel's legal life (1964b:135). The 'we' and 'us' in YHWH's speech could hardly be the people of Israel, for they have never found themselves in such a privileged position as to decide if YHWH is indeed God. Commenting on Isa 41:1, Westermann mentions the idea that the background of the trial speeches may lie in the 'age-old concept, widespread in the ancient east, of a heavenly court' (1966:55), but he does not develop it any further. In fact, the motif of the heavenly council is present in the Hebrew Bible as well as in Isaiah 40-55. In Ps 82, where a trial takes place in the heavenly council (v.1), the judgement apparently is also concerned with this question of divine identity (vv.6-7). Moreover, whenever YHWH speaks in the first person plural 'we', it seems that the context is none other than the heavenly council (cf. Gen 1:26; Isa 6:8). Furthermore, Seitz agrees with Robinson (1944; whom he consistently misreads as Rowley) and Cross (1953) that the scene of Isa 40:1-8 is also the heavenly council (1990:231 & 243; 1991:197-199). Therefore, it is perhaps only reasonable for us to conclude that the trial

speeches involving YHWH, the nations, and their deities are based on this common Ancient Near Eastern mythological idea of the heavenly council. As Jacobsen points out, '[t]he highest authority in the Mesopotamian universe was the assembly of the gods' (1976:86).

#### 4.4 Isaiah 43:8-15

וַחֲרָשִׁים וְאַזְבֵּיחַ לְמוֹ:	<sup>08</sup> הוֹצִיא עַם-עוֹר וְעֵינַיִם יֵשׁ
וְיֹאסֵפוּ לְאֵמִים	<sup>09</sup> כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם נִקְבְּצוּ בַחֲדָי
וְרֹאשֵׁיבֹת יִשְׁמְרֵנּוּ	מִי בָהֶם בְּגִיד זֹאת
וְיִשְׁמְעוּ וְיֹאמְרוּ אָמֵן:	יְהוָה עֲדִיתָם וְיִצְדָּקוּ
וְעַבְדֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּחִרְתִּי	<sup>10</sup> אַתָּם עַדִּי גֵאֵם-יְהוָה
וְתִכְבְּדוּ כִי-אֲנִי הוּא	לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּ וְתִאֱמִינוּ לִי
וְאַחֲרֵי לֹא יִתְּנָה:	לְפָנַי לֹא-נוֹצֵר אֵל
וְאֵין מִבְּלַעַדִּי מוֹשִׁיעַ:	<sup>11</sup> אֲנִכִּי אֲנִכִּי יְהוָה
וְהִשְׁמַעְתִּי וְאֵין בָּכֶם זֶר	<sup>12</sup> אֲנִכִּי הַגִּדְתִּי וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי
וְאֲנִי-אֵל: <sup>13</sup> גֵּם-מִיּוֹם אֲנִי הוּא	וְאַתָּם עַדִּי גֵאֵם-יְהוָה
אֲפַעֵל וְיָמִי יִשְׁכַּבְּנָה:	וְאֵין מִדְּי מַצִּיל
גֵּאֲלֵכֶם קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל	<sup>14</sup> כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה
וְהוֹרֵדְתִּי בְּרִיתִים בְּלֶם	לְמַעַנְכֶם שְׁלַחְתִּי בְבִלְהָ
וּכְשָׂדִים בְּאֲגִיּוֹת רִנָּתָם:	
בוֹרֵא יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלְּכֶם:	<sup>15</sup> אֲנִי יְהוָה קְדוֹשְׁכֶם

<sup>08</sup>Bring out a people blind but there are eyes,  
And deaf but it has ears.

<sup>09</sup>Let all the nations be assembled together,  
And let peoples be gathered.

Who among them will declare this?

And former things will they make us hear?

Let them present their witnesses and be vindicated,

And let them hear and say: it is true.

<sup>10</sup>You are my witnesses - the oracle of YHWH,

And my servant whom I have chosen;

So that you may know and believe in me,

And you may discern that I am he.

Before me no El was formed,

And after me none will exist.

<sup>11</sup>I, only I, am YHWH,

And none apart from me is a saviour.

<sup>12</sup>It is I who have declared and saved, [stranger.

And I have made heard, and was not among you a

And you are my witnesses - the oracle of YHWH,

And I am El, <sup>13</sup>and also from beginning<sup>11</sup> I am he.

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<sup>11</sup> מ'ס מִיּוֹם, supported by אָ, can mean 'from today', as the article may be omitted in poetry; thus NRSV has 'henceforth'. Nevertheless, all the ancient versions seem to read מֵעוֹלָם. It is possible that they are trying

And none from my hand can deliver,

I shall work and who will reverse it?

<sup>14</sup> Thus said YHWH,

Your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:

Because of you I have sent to Babylon,

And I will bring down bars,<sup>12</sup> all of them,

And Chaldeans in the ships of their cry.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>15</sup> I am YHWH your Holy One,

The creator of Israel your king.

The pericope begins again with a summons to trial (vv.8 and 9aα), raises the question introduced by מִי (v.9aβ), and concludes with YHWH's repeated self-predications (vv.11-13). But there is also a significant middle section (vv.9b-10) which discusses

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to interpret a word which resists a literal translation, but it is also possible that מִיּוֹם is an idiom meaning 'from the first day'.

<sup>12</sup> Our translation agrees with Elliger (1978:331) and many others to follow B (*vectes*) in repointing מ' to בְּרִיחִים into בְּרִיחִים, which apparently is suggested by the context (Watts 1987:128). Both C (φευγοντας) and C (rwqh), however, support M.

<sup>13</sup> Barnes (1928) paraphrases the difficult line as 'Chaldeans in their noisy ships' (254), asking, 'What ancient ship whether of oars or of sails was ever handled without much shouting?' (253).

the new issue of the witnesses and reveals the presence of Israel as one of the parties in the heavenly council. Finally, an epilogue (vv.14-15) is attached to the trial speech proper, elaborating on the claim of YHWH's sovereignty (v.13a $\beta$ -b).

Commentators agree that the very first line of this trial speech refers to none other but Israel. They are a people (עַם) clearly distinguished from 'the nations' (הַגּוֹיִם) or 'peoples' (לְאֻמִּים) in v.9a $\alpha$ . However, why is Israel described as 'blind but there are eyes / deaf but it has ears' (v.8)? The description is generally understood to represent their stubborn and rebellious attitude towards YHWH, and readers are usually referred to Isa 42:18-21 for a fuller elucidation of this specific motif. In the last chapter, we have already explained that in 42:18-21 as well as in other passages like Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 16; the primary sense of blindness and deafness refers to the oppression of Israel in exile with a positive hope for divine deliverance. Now if we read Isa 43:8 without being influenced by the secondary nuance of spiritual obstinacy in Isa 42:18-21, it is entirely possible to acquire the impression that here YHWH is in fact encouraging rather than reproaching his people. Israel in exile is indeed blind and deaf because of the oppression from Babylon, nevertheless, the people still

have eyes and ears and are therefore able to serve as YHWH's witnesses in the trial.

Witnesses are called during the trial to substantiate the claims of the disputing parties. The nations are challenged to present their witnesses so that their deities may be shown to have authority over historical events and are therefore truly divine. As we have noted before, the things to declare (v.9aβ) are not necessarily in the future, for it is not a 'prediction proof'. Israel is called in to bear witness to YHWH's powerful acts of salvation in the past, and these divine acts testify to the sovereign power of YHWH over human history. The consequence of such testimony is that Israel will know and believe in YHWH (v.10bα), and this seems to be precisely the intention of the trial speeches. This is the reason why all along we may have the feeling that these speeches are not so much against the nations or their deities as for Israel, who finds himself in a state of utter powerlessness and requires to be reminded once again of the power of YHWH. Israel does not need any more rebukes; his blindness and deafness are basically signs of being sinned against rather than sinning. When the people of Israel in exile are desperate for proofs of YHWH's sovereignty, the prophet declares, אָתָם עֵדֵי נְאֻם-יְהוָה (You are my witnesses - the oracle of YHWH; v.10aα). Such is the dramatic



irony of the trial speeches.

The following two sections (vv.9b-10 and 11-13) of the trial speech appears to balance each other in a chiasmic manner:

A.	v.9b	The deities have no witness
B.	v.10a	You are my witnesses
C.	v.10ba	You may know + believe + discern
D.	v.10bβ	Only YHWH
D'.	v.11	Only YHWH
C'.	v.12a	I declared + saved + announced
B'.	v.12b-13aα	You are my witnesses
A'.	v.13aβ-b	YHWH is sovereign

The chiasmic structure may not be a perfect one, but it does at least help us to see the integrity of v.12a, where we need three verbs to balance the other trio in v.10ba. Williamson's suggestion (1979) to have the two verbs וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי and וְהַשְׁמַעְתִּי reversed is indeed attractive, but unfortunately it is without any textual support. After all, ℣ is not an impossible reading, if only we ignore its accentuation to follow instead the example of the counterpart in v.10ba. The focus of the argument is not about abstract monotheism but rather the practical and immediate question of whether YHWH is the one who has the sovereign power to save Israel.

Apart from affirming that he is the only

saviour, YHWH also professes that he is El (v.12b $\beta$ ). The identification is so complete that YHWH can proclaim that in fact all along he is El (v.13a $\alpha$ ); there has not been another El before YHWH, and there will not be one after him either (v.10b $\beta$ ). Why is there such an eagerness to identify YHWH with El? If these trial speeches are set against the background of the heavenly council, then we may understand YHWH's profession to be El as a self-proclamation of the highest authority and ultimate power. By the witness of Israel, YHWH is shown to be the God who is powerful enough to declare and accomplish his will in human history for the salvation of his own people. Since there is no credible substantiation for any competing claim, YHWH is acknowledged to be the supreme authority in control of all events past and future, or El in the heavenly council. It is interesting to observe how such a great 'monotheistic' confession is being worked out from the background and the language of full-blown mythological polytheism (cf. Labuschagne 1966:144-146).

Last of all, vv.14-15 may be taken as an epilogue (just like 41:5-7) attached to the trial speech in order to elaborate on this sovereign power of YHWH. The text of v.14b is far from satisfactory, but the idea of YHWH, who is the redeemer and king of Israel, acting on behalf of his people against Babylon may still be

recognizable. If YHWH decides to deliver Israel by defeating Babylon, no one will be able to reverse it (v.13).

#### 4.5 Isaiah 45:20-25

הַתַּנְבִּישׁוּ בְּחֵדָּר	<sup>20</sup> הִקְבְּצוּ וָבֹאוּ
פְּלִיטֵי הַגּוֹיִם	
הַנְּשָׂאִים אֶת-עֵץ פִּסְלָם	לֹא יָדְעוּ
לֹא יוֹשִׁיעַ:	וּמִתְפַּלְלִים אֶל-אֵל
אֲףִי יִקְרָעוּ בְּחֵדָּר	<sup>21</sup> תִּגִּידוּ וְתִגִּישׁוּ
מֵאֵז הַגִּידָה	מִי הַשְׁמִיעַ זֹאת מִקְדָּם
וְאֵין-עוֹד אֱלֹהִים מִבְּלַעֲדִי	הַלּוֹא אֲנִי יְהוָה
אֵין זוֹלָתִי:	אֶל-צָדִיק וּמוֹשִׁיעַ
כָּל-אֶפְסֵי-אֲרֶץ	<sup>22</sup> פָּגוּ-אֵלֵי וְהִתְשַׁעוּ
<sup>23</sup> כִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי	כִּי אֲנִי-אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד:
דָּבָר וְלֹא יָשׁוּב	יָצָא מִפִּי צִדְקָה
תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל-לִשׁוֹן:	כִּי-לִי תִכְרַע כָּל-בָּרָךְ
צִדְקוֹת יַעֲזֹ	<sup>24</sup> אֲףִי בִיהֲרָה לִי אָמַר
וַיִּבְשׁוּ כָל הַנְּחָרִים בּוֹ:	עָדִיו יָבֹוא
כָּל-זֶרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל:	<sup>25</sup> בִּיהֲרָה יִצְדָּקוּ וְיִתְחַלְּלוּ

<sup>20</sup> Assemble yourselves and come!

Draw near together,  
The refugees of the nations!  
They do not know - those who carry  
Their wooden idol,  
And those who pray to El -  
He will not save.

<sup>21</sup>Declare and bring near!

In fact, consult together!  
Who has announced this from of old?  
In time past declared it?  
Is it not I, YHWH?  
And none other is God apart from me;  
El victorious and a saviour,  
None except me.

<sup>22</sup>Turn towards me and be saved,

All ends of earth!  
For I am El, and there is none other,  
<sup>23</sup>By myself I have sworn.  
From my mouth has come justice,  
A word, and it will not turn back.  
For to me every knee will bend,  
Every tongue will swear.

<sup>24</sup>Only in YHWH - one has said of me -

Are justice and strength;

To him one will come,

And all those angry at him will be ashamed.

<sup>25</sup>By YHWH they will be vindicated and glorified -

All Israel's seed.

The delimitation of this pericope remains a controversy among commentators. Sawyer (1986:99) recognizes only the two verses of vv.20-21 as constituting the trial speech, whereas Schoors (1973:233-238) wants to defend the integrity of the entire passage from vv.18 to 25. Whybray (1975:110) and Westermann (1966:140) are both of the opinion that vv.18-19 are independent from the trial speech of vv.20-25, but Melugin thinks that the trial speech comprises vv.18-21, with vv.22-25 'display[ing] the genre of an exhortation' (1976:128). If the pattern of the other three trial speeches (Isa 41:1-7, 21-29; and 43:8-15) is to be followed, then v.20 must be seen as the proper starting point of this pericope with the summons to trial issued by YHWH. The messenger formula at the beginning of v.18 is in fact not found in any of the other trial speeches either. That is why we have already discussed vv.18-19 as a disputation pericope in chapter two.

The trial speech beginning at v.20 again is seen to comprise the three elements of a summons to

speak (v.20-21a), the question introduced by מָה (v.21b $\alpha$ ), and YHWH's self-predication (the rest of v.21b). However, there are three reasons why in our opinion the trial speech continues beyond v.21. Firstly, while the nations are said to be 'praying to El who will not save' (v.20b $\beta$ ), YHWH later declares himself as 'El victorious' (v.21b $\gamma$ ), and further on the climax appears to have been reached when YHWH finally affirms, 'For I am El' (v.22b). This last self-predication of YHWH must be seen as part of the trial speech, the focus of which is upon this question of who really is the sovereign God. Secondly, YHWH's invitation to 'all ends of earth' 'to turn towards him and be saved' (v.22a) is a forceful answer to the derelict state of 'the refugees of the nations', who are praying to an idol powerless to save them (v.20b). Without vv.22-23, the proclamation of YHWH as 'a saviour' will be deprived of a significant dimension of its content. Thirdly, vv.20-23 are a continuous speech of YHWH addressed to a non-Israelite audience (cf. v.20), whereas vv.18-19 are a speech directed clearly towards Israel. However, vv.24-25 look like once again an epilogue attached to the trial speech proper; they represent perhaps the nations' response reiterating the uniqueness of YHWH as well as his saving purpose particularly for Israel.

The restriction of the trial speech to

vv.20-23 carries two implications. On the one hand, by excluding the allusion to the motif of creation in v.18 from the trial speech, we may report that the claim of YHWH's supremacy in authority and power is being argued and defended without any reference to him as the creator in all the four trial speeches. On the other hand, the exclusion of the mentioning of Israel in v.25 from the trial speech proper also highlights the nations to be the recipients of YHWH's salvation. Schoors maintains that both 'all ends of earth' and 'every knee and tongue' refer to 'the totality of Israel' (1973:236), but it is obviously forcing a very unnatural reading on to the text. This is a trial speech which concludes with so deep a conviction of YHWH being the only God and saviour that even the nations will have to turn towards him in order to be saved. However, Stuhlmueeller's thesis (1970:196) that Deutero-Isaiah's idea of world redemption is being developed from the concept of cosmic creation must be treated with caution, for there appears to be no such connection found in this trial speech, which argues for a logical foundation of the confession of YHWH as 'El victorious and a saviour'.

#### **4.6 Summary**

Our examination of the four pericopae which form-critics have classified as trial speeches between

YHWH and the nations within Isaiah 40-55 may result in the following four observations:

Firstly, the four pericopae, namely, Isa 41:1-7, 21-29; 43:8-15; and 45:20-25, may indeed be identified as trial speeches. They all contain the three elements of YHWH's summons to speak before the court, the central question of dispute introduced by מִי (who), and YHWH's self-predication that he alone is the one God with supreme authority and sovereign power. In three of the four passages, we find also an epilogue attached to the trial speech proper. Irons' distinction between the plaintiff's appeal (41:1-5; 43:8-13; and 45:20-21) and the judge's speech (41:21-29) is difficult to sustain, as YHWH seems to be both the one presiding over the trial (41:1a, 21; 43:9; and 45:20) as well as the one arguing for his own case (41:4, 28; 43:11-13; and 45:21-23).

Secondly, the issue on trial is the divinity of YHWH and the deities of the nations. The *Sitz im Leben* of such a trial is neither the city gate nor the cult, for this is not a question that Israel is capable to decide. We agree with Westermann that the heavenly council is the only legitimate context where the competing claims of divine identity may be settled.



Thirdly, the proofs of YHWH's sovereignty and uniqueness are not predictions about future happenings but rather his control over events past, present, and future. The existence of the other deities is a reality never to be ignored in the exile, but Israel in his weakness is called upon to be the witness of YHWH's powerful saving acts. The trial is conducted not just to discredit the pagan deities before the nations, it is more fundamentally aimed at the people of Israel in exile, reminding them of YHWH's ability to save and help them.<sup>14</sup> Even the last trial speech in Isa 45:20-25, which is addressed entirely to the nations, finishes with an epilogue reiterating YHWH's saving purpose for Israel. The intention of these trial speeches is clearly for the encouragement and support of the people of Israel.

Finally, the trial speeches have not referred to YHWH's power in creation as evidence of his sovereignty. In the trial speeches YHWH proclaims himself to be El and the only saviour, and the nations must turn to him in order to be saved. But this

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<sup>14</sup> This is what Harner distinguishes between a 'direct' audience, to whom the speeches are ostensibly addressed, and an 'indirect' audience, for whom the prophetic message is actually intended (1988:160).

'universal' appeal of YHWH's salvation is not related at all to the motif of cosmic creation.

Many form-critics also regard Isa 44:6-8 as another trial speech pericope. Although the three elements of a trial speech may be found here, the divine speech begins with the concluding self-predications before any argument even gets started. Moreover, the focus of the passage appears to be the comforting of Israel rather than the claim of YHWH's sovereignty. In our opinion, Isa 44:1-8 may best be considered as an oracle of salvation, as the presence of the messenger formula together with the word of comfort have clearly indicated. It is to these oracles of salvation that we shall turn our attention in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### ORACLES OF SALVATION

#### 5.1 Introduction

When Begrich (1934:81) announces he has identified in Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah several texts<sup>1</sup> as prophetic imitations of the priestly oracle of salvation (*Heilsorakel*), his hypothesis comprises two significant arguments in relation to the structure of the form as well as the *Sitz im Leben* of the genre. On the basis of his discussion of its various elements, we may reconstruct the form of the priestly oracle of salvation as follows:

- (1) Introductory formula, 'Do not fear';
- (2) Direct address;
- (3) Basis of help (a nominal sentence);

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<sup>1</sup> These texts are Isa 41:8-13, 14-16; 43:1-3a & 5; (44:2-5); 48:17-19; 49:7 & 14-15; 51:7-8; 54:4-8; and Jer 30:10-11 = 46:27-28.

(4) Expression of hearing (perfect tense); and

(5) Announcement of future (imperfect tense).

However, Begrich subsequently<sup>2</sup> modifies his view on the structure of the genre, as he expands at the same time the list of priestly oracles of salvation in Deutero-Isaiah to include twenty-four pericopae (1963:14-16).<sup>3</sup> In its complete form the oracle of salvation is now shown to contain the following threefold form:

(1) Announcement of YHWH's intervention;

(2) Consequence of YHWH's intervention; and

(3) Purpose of YHWH's intervention.

Missing from the new structural outline are the formula, 'Do not fear', the direct address, and the nominal substantiating clause.

While Begrich's revised structure of the oracles of salvation in Isaiah 40-55 is supported by von Waldow (1953:12-13), Westermann (1964a:357-365) seeks to reformulate the same structure in a more specific way:

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<sup>2</sup> In his *Studien zu Deuterojesaja* (BWANT 77), which was first published in 1938. Our page reference is to the 1963 reprint edition (ThBü 20).

<sup>3</sup> They are Isa 41:8-13, 14-16, 17-20; 42:14-17; 43:1-7, 16-21; 44:1-5; 45:1-7, 14-17; 46:3-4, 12-13; 48:17-19; 49:7 & 8-12(13), 14-21, 22-23, 24-26; 51:6-8, 12-16; 54:4-6, 7-10, 11-12+13b, 14a+13a-17; 55:8-13.

- (1) Address (*Anrede*);
- (2) Assurance of salvation (*Heilszuspruch*): 'Do not fear';
- (3) Substantiation (*Begründung*):
  - (a) nominal: (I am with you, I am your God),
  - (b) verbal: (I strengthen you, I help you);
- (4) Outcome (*Folge*): for the suppliant and against his enemy; and
- (5) Goal (*Ziel*).

Westermann's analysis helps him to identify six pericopae in Isaiah 40-55 as oracles of salvation (1964b:118),<sup>4</sup> and to allocate form-critically the other salvation speeches without the formula, 'Do not fear', into a new genre called the proclamation of salvation (*Heilsankündigung*). Nevertheless, as Boadt observes,

'even a short examination of these passages will reveal that they often do not follow the sequence of Westermann's pattern (e.g., two sections will be mixed together or reversed), nor do any of them contain fully all of the elements found in the outline' (1973:21).

Isa 41:8-13, which has been taken by Westermann as a model for the genre and is supposed to represent the fullest example of it, does not contain the last

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<sup>4</sup> They are Isa 41:8-13; 41:14-16; 43:1-4; 43:5-7; 44:1-5; and 54:4-6.

element, the goal (*Ziel*). Thus in a more recent rehearsal of the structure of the oracles of salvation in Isaiah 40-55, this last element of the goal has been dropped (Westermann 1987:36). On the other hand, in his comparison of the salvation oracles in Isaiah 40-55 and some extra-biblical passages, Harner (1969:419 and 423) proposes an essential structure consisting of four elements:

- (1) Direct address to the recipient;
- (2) Reassurance, 'Do not fear';
- (3) Divine self-predication; and
- (4) Message of salvation.

He adds that '[t]he order of these elements may vary, some may be repeated, and the address and the self-predication may be omitted if this information is available from the context' (424). Judging from the diversified opinions on the formal elements of the genre, we may be justified in re-examining the structure of the oracle of salvation pericopae with an open mind.

Nor is the question of the *Sitz im Leben* of these oracles of salvation a well settled one. Begrich calls the oracles 'priestly', because he thinks he has re-discovered the genre of *Heilsorakel* which is no longer preserved in the Psalter. Scholars observe in the lamenting psalms a sudden reversal of mood towards the end, whereby the supplication changes into thanksgiving

or praise. Such a reversal may be explained by an oracle of salvation pronounced by the priest, assuring the worshipper that the petition is heard and granted by YHWH (Küchler 1918:298-301).<sup>5</sup> However, Begrich's classic thesis is questioned by Conrad (1981), who points out that the major problem with Begrich's argument is that his investigation has been confined to Isaiah 40-55 only, and hence he pays no attention to the divine oracles appearing as answers to lament in the psalms.<sup>6</sup> According to Conrad, the structure of these divine oracles is significantly different from that of those identified in Isaiah 40-55 by Begrich. Moreover, when other divine oracles are found to share a similar structure to that outlined in Begrich's examples, they are not answers for a lament but rather encouragements given to someone who has a task to perform. It is interesting to find Conrad changing his mind more than once. In his unpublished doctoral thesis (1974:52-118), he first identifies the five Isaianic texts usually designated as oracles of salvation (i.e., 41:8-13, 14-16; 43:1-4, 5-7; and 44:1-5) as reflecting a common

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<sup>5</sup> Küchler's proposal, while accepted by many, has not gone unchallenged. See Kilian (1968:172-185).

<sup>6</sup> Conrad cites the following examples from Küchler: Pss 12:5; 21:8-12; 60:6-8=108:7-9; 75:2ff; 81:6-16; 91:14-16; and 95:8-11.

structure of the single *Gattung* of the 'Vocational Exhortation'. Subsequently, in another article entitled 'The "Fear Not" Oracles in Second Isaiah', he states categorically that these texts 'do not represent a uniform structure and a common *Gattung*' (1984:132). But in yet another essay he asserts that these five texts 'follow the sterotypical structure of the War Oracle used to address a king who is threatened by a military threat to his kingship' (1985a:100).<sup>7</sup> Such wavering of one's judgement may have revealed precisely the limited horizon of form-critical analyses.

According to von Waldow, the salvation oracles found in Isaiah 40-55 are not imitations of a priestly genre; they are rather actual speeches spoken by the prophet in the cult (1953:86-103). The messenger formula, the concreteness of details in the salvation promises, and the regularity in structure all indicate

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<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed argument, see Conrad (1985b:79-107). This seems to be his final position, which is sustained in his subsequent publications (Conrad 1988b:75-77; 1991:34-82). Cf. also Merendino (1972:13-38). However, Dion (1967 and 1970) remains unconvinced of the distinctiveness of the 'fear not' formula for the holy war phraseology, and Conrad is perhaps mistaken in citing him as one who has 'suggested that the *Gattung* has some relation to the traditions of Holy War in Israel' (1981:242,n.35).



that these pericopae belong to a prophetic genre, and that they are proclamations uttered in their original setting. On the other hand, Harner also argues that the close parallels 'in general structure and in detail' between the salvation oracles in Second Isaiah and the extra-biblical salvation oracles 'suggest that in both cases we are dealing with a well-defined, self-contained pattern of speech' (1969:425). Thus if, after Conrad's criticism, there may not be sufficient evidence to label the oracles as 'priestly', it is perhaps still reasonable to continue using 'oracle of salvation' to identify the genre in Isaiah 40-55.

## 5.2 Isaiah 41:8-16

וְעַקֵּב אֲשֶׁר בְּתַרְתִּיךָ	<sup>08</sup> וְאַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדִּי
זָרַע אֲבָרְהָם אֶתְּבִי:	
וּמֵאֲצִילֶיךָ קִרְאתִיךָ	<sup>09</sup> אֲשֶׁר תַּחֲזִיקְתִּיךָ מִקְצֹת הָאָרֶץ
בְּתַרְתִּיךָ וְלֹא מֵאֲסִתִּיךָ:	וְאָמַר לְךָ עַבְדִּי-אַתָּה
אֵל-תִּשְׁתַּע כִּי-אֲנִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ	<sup>10</sup> אֵל-תִּירָא כִּי עִמָּה-אָנִי
אֶף-תִּמְכֹּתִיךָ בִּימִין צִדְקִי:	אֲמַצְתִּיךָ אֶף-עֲזָרְתִּיךָ
כָּל תַּבְּתָרִים בָּךְ	<sup>11</sup> הֵן רִבְשׁוֹ וְיִכְלָמוּ
אֲנָשִׁי רִיבָה:	וְהָיוּ כְּאֵין וְיֹאבְדוּ
אֲנָשִׁי מִצְּתָה	<sup>12</sup> תִּבְקָשֶׁם וְלֹא תִמָּצְאוּ
אֲנָשִׁי מִלְחָמָתָה:	וְהָיוּ כְּאֵין וּכְאֶפֶס

מִתְזַיֵּק יִמְיָנֶךָ  
אֲנִי עֲזָרְתִּיךָ:  
מִתִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וּבְאֵלֶיךָ קָדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

<sup>13</sup> כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
הָאֵמַר לְךָ אֵל-תִּירָא  
<sup>14</sup> אֵל-תִּירָאִי הוֹלַעַת יַעֲקֹב  
אֲנִי עֲזָרְתִּיךָ בָּאֵם-יְהוָה

חֶדֶשׁ בַּעַל פִּיפְיּוֹת  
וּבִכְעוֹת כַּמֵּץ תָּשִׂים:  
וּסְעָרָה תַּפְיֵץ אוֹתָם  
בְּקָדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּתְהַלֵּל:

<sup>15</sup> תִּבְּה שְׁמִתִּיךָ לְמִזְבֵּחַ חָרוֹץ  
תְּדוֹשׁ חָרִים וְתִחַךְ  
<sup>16</sup> תִּזְרַם יְרוּחַ תִּשְׁאָם  
וְאִתָּה תִּגִּיל בִּיהוָה

<sup>08</sup> But you, Israel, my servant,

Jacob, whom I have chosen,

Seed of Abraham, my lover:

<sup>09</sup> Whom I have strengthened from the ends of the earth,

And from its corners I have called;

And I have said to you, you are my servant,

I have chosen you, and I have not rejected you.

<sup>10</sup> Do not fear, for I am with you,

Do not be afraid,<sup>8</sup> for I am your God;

I have empowered you, indeed I have helped you,

Indeed I supported you with the right hand of my

[victory.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Isa 41:23. Some Hebrew Mss do have תִּשְׁחַת (Elliger 1978:132-133).

<sup>11</sup>Look! They will be ashamed and be humiliated -

All those being angry with you;

They will become like nothing and perish -

Those in dispute with you;

<sup>12</sup>You may seek them but will not find them -

Those in contention with you;

They will become like nothing and like naught -

Those in battle with you.

<sup>13</sup>For I am YHWH your God,

Strengthening your right hand;

The one saying to you: Do not fear,

I myself have helped you.

<sup>14</sup>Do not fear, worm of Jacob,

Dead ones of<sup>9</sup> Israel;

I myself have helped you - the utterance of YHWH,

And the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer.

<sup>15</sup>Look! I have made you a sharp threshing-sledge,

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<sup>9</sup> מ's מְתִי is repointed to מְתִי after Q<sup>a</sup>, A, O, and B. Driver's suggestion (1935:399), which BHS follows, of an emendation to מֵת corresponding to an Akkadian word *mutu* meaning 'louse' or 'cornworm' appears to be on shaky ground according to Schoors (1973:59-60). On the other hand, Westermann's proposal (1966:63,n.1) to add the phrase אֶל-תִּשְׁתַּעֲרֵי seems unnecessary when the poetic line is compared to those preceding it.

New, double-edged;  
 You will thresh mountains and you will crush (them),  
 And hills you will make like chaff,  
<sup>16</sup>You will winnow them and wind will carry them,  
 And a tempest will scatter them.  
 And you yourself will rejoice in YHWH,  
 In the Holy One of Israel you will boast.

Isa 41:8-16 is usually taken to comprise two independent oracles of salvation, each exemplifying the full structure of the genre.<sup>10</sup> Both begin with the *Anrede* (vv.8-9 and 14a) and the *Heilszuspruch*, 'Do not fear' (vv.10a and 14a $\alpha$ ), followed by the *Begründung* in nominal clauses (vv.10a & 14b $\beta$ ) and verbal clauses with the perfect tense (vv.10b and 14b $\alpha$ +15a), then finally conclude with the *Folge* (vv.11-12 and 15b-16a) and the *Ziel* (v.16b). The analysis is almost perfect except for v.13, which cannot be regarded as the final *Ziel* of the first oracle. It is considered to be either a repetition of the *Begründung* or, as Schoors puts it, 'an oracle of salvation *in nuce*' (1973:58), and in both instances the

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<sup>10</sup> See for example the table in Schoors (1973:47). The only exception to this form-critical unanimity is Merendino (1981:135-178), who discusses these verses together as one pericope. But he continues to see it as consisting of two parts, divided between vv.13 and 14.

verse appears to be something extra to the formal structure of the genre. Perhaps this is the very first hint to caution us against squeezing the text into an ideal scheme which may exist only in theory.

Apart from v.13, there are yet two other problem areas. First of all, according to the above-mentioned analysis, the *Anrede* in the first oracle (v.8-9) is much more elaborate than that of the second oracle (v.14a). But v.9, though being part of the *Anrede*, is very similar to the verbal clauses of the *Begründung* in v.10b in terms of both content as well as syntax. Without ignoring the strong continuity between vv.8 and 9, it is however possible to consider vv.9 and 10 as a series of divine self-predications uttered in support of the *Heilszuspruch*, 'Do not fear'. Moreover, the parallel between vv.9-10 and 13-14 is too obvious to be overlooked:

v.9a	וְהָיָה קוֹתִיךָ	v.13a	בְּחַזְקִי
v.9b	וְאָמַר לִי	v.13b	וְאָמַר לִי
v.10a	אֶל-תִּירָא	v.14a	אֶל-תִּירָאִי
v.10b	אֶף-עֲזָרְתִּיךָ	v.14b	אֲנִי עֲזָרְתִּיךָ

Thus it seems to make better sense if these four verses are taken together as two parallel units echoing one another, rather than having each verse assigned to a different motif in two allegedly disconnected

pericopae.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, having established the corresponding relationship between vv.9-10 and 13-14, we are further prepared to argue for the same regarding vv.11-12 and 15-16. That vv.11-12 belong together is beyond dispute. But to separate v.15a from its following lines by classifying it as the end of the *Begründung* originating from v.14b is to turn a blind eye to its opening interjection, *הִנֵּה* (Look!), the counterpart of which in v.11a clearly marks off the beginning of a new part. Despite the fact that the verbal clause is in the perfect instead of the imperfect tense, v.15a initiates an extended metaphor that continues into vv.15b and 16a.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the persuasiveness of a concluding *Ziel* to be found in v.16b is not at all mandatory, for its presence is not always required in the other oracles of salvation. We are therefore not

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<sup>11</sup> The fact that there appears to be another *Anrede* in v.14a does not necessarily indicate the beginning of a new oracle. In Isa 44:1-2 we also find a second *Anrede* (v.2b) almost right after the first one (v.1).

<sup>12</sup> The switching into the second person feminine singular suffixes in vv.14 and 15a is obviously due to the introduction of the feminine image of the 'worm', and does not inevitably dictate a separate motif from its surrounding texts. In fact, the distinct continuity of the thematic contents in vv.13-14 and 15-16 must be deemed a much more significant pointer for the determination of poetic units.

without sufficient ground to affirm the integrity of vv.15-16 in parallel to that of vv.11-12.

As a result, Isa 41:8-16 must not be considered as two independent oracles of salvation, only subsequently put together on some *Stichwort* principle. It is rather a very balanced but less sophisticated pericope consisting of three elements, namely, the address (v.8), the assurances (vv.9-10 and 13-14), and the promises of salvation (vv.11-12 and 15-16). The same formula is used twice; hence the linking כִּי at the beginning of v.13.

YHWH is seen here addressing his people in exile as 'my servant' (עַבְדִּי), 'one whom I have chosen' (אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתִּיךָ), and 'my lover' (אֲהָבִי). The last word should not be understood as a description of Abraham, just as v.9a is precluded from being taken as an allusion to Abraham by the two second person masculine singular suffixes, הָיִינוּ קִרְבִּיךָ and קִרְבִּיךָ, which clearly define the relative particle אֲשֶׁר as referring back to the opening word of v.8, וְאַתָּה (pace Conrad 1974:134-137). Moreover, v.9b almost repeats immediately the series of this threefold address, but substituting אֲהָבִי with the phrase וְלֹא מָאַסְתִּיךָ (and I have not rejected you). Now the reference to 'rejection' is not only an opposite parallel to 'election', for the same verb מָאַס

is found in another oracle where the context is undoubtedly the marital relationship between YHWH and his people portrayed as his wife (Isa 54:6). Thus the translation of  $\Sigma$  and  $\mathfrak{B}$  of אֱתֶרֶב into 'my friend'<sup>13</sup> is not only weak but inaccurate. When the verb אֶדְבַּר appears in yet another oracle (Isa 43:4), it is again pointing to a much deeper bond than mere friendship.

Nevertheless, the motif of YHWH's marital relationship with his people, though not to be ignored, does not constitute the major focus of this oracle. The assurances in the pericope (vv.9-10 and 13-14) repeatedly draw our attention to YHWH's strengthening (חֲזַק) and helping (עֲזַר) Israel. Interestingly enough, these two words play a key role also in the preceding verses, where the idol worshippers are seen desperately helping (עֲזַר, v.6) and strengthening (חֲזַק, v.7) each other and their deities. The dramatic contrast must be

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<sup>13</sup> 'του φίλου μου' and 'amici mei'; see Watts (1987:99). North's remark that אֱתֶרֶב 'implies a more intimate relationship than רֵעִי, the usual word for "my friend/companion"' (1964:97) falls short of drawing out the implicit imagery of marriage, whereas his citing of 2Chr 20:7 and James 2:23 (together with the two translations mentioned above) does suggest a subsequent tradition in understanding Abraham as a 'friend' of God, but it has no immediate relevance to our exegesis of Isa 41:8.



deemed deliberate, and it certainly lends support to the argument that the opening word **וְאַתָּה** (but you) is not to be taken as a stereotyped feature of the *Gattung* referring to some unrecorded lamentations, but rather an important device by which the prophet links the present oracle to its literary context.<sup>14</sup> A similar ironic comparison may also be identified in the reiteration of YHWH choosing Jacob (**בְּיַרְדֵּן**, vv.8aβ and 9bβ), for in both 40:20 and 41:24 we read that it is rather the idol worshippers who are choosing (**בְּיָדָם**) their deities. In other words, the people of Israel are reassured that YHWH is not the same as the nations' deities, who stand in need of being chosen and strengthened by their

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<sup>14</sup> That **וְאַתָּה** is considered to be part of the *Gattung* formula is a commonly accepted notion among form-critics. Whybray is in fact speaking for the group when he explains that the word 'indicates a connexion with something which has gone before, but not necessarily with the preceding section in the book as it is now arranged' (1975:63). Conrad argues most vigorously against it first in his dissertation (1974:179), and repeats his argument in a subsequent essay (1984:132). However, we do not agree with him that '[t]he adversative *waw* sets up a contrast between the actions of "you" (Jacob/Israel) in xli 8ff. and the actions of the nations described in the preceding verses, xli 5-7' (*ibid.*). In our opinion, the contrast is rather between what YHWH is doing for his people and what the nations are doing for their deities.

worshippers, not to mention the impossibility of their being able to help anyone. On the contrary, it is YHWH who has not only chosen his people, but he is also going to strengthen and help them in their needs. The paramount concern as expressed in the assurances of this oracle of salvation is still the power of YHWH vis-à-vis the lack of it among the deities of the nations.

The underlying theme of divine and human power becomes transparent once again in the promises of the oracle of salvation (vv.11-12 and 15-16). Firstly, the power of Israel's enemies 'is in inverse proportion to their violence' (North 1964:98). Here the phrase **כְּאֵין וְכִאֲפֹס** (v.12ba) reminds us of Isa 40:17 and 41:24, where the nations are reduced to be 'like nothing' (**כְּאֵין**) and 'less than nil' (**כִּאֲפֹס**), or their deities are condemned as 'less than nothing' (**כְּאֵין**) and their deeds as 'less than nil' (**כִּאֲפֹס** = **כִּאֲפֵעַ**). Secondly, the feeble 'worm of Jacob' and the despondent 'dead ones of Israel' (v.14a) are being transformed into 'a sharp threshing-sledge' (v.15a), capable of crushing mountains. Here the full impact of the poetic hyperbole must not be imperilled by historical questions like whether Israel is ever given an aggressive role elsewhere in Isaiah 40-55, or whether YHWH is to raise Israel afresh to

become a military superpower.<sup>15</sup> Hamlin's idea that these 'mountains and hills' have 'a double significance. . .as foundations of the earth and the dwelling place of gods', and hence 'they are historical symbols of the idolatrous pride of nations' (1954:189) is attractive though difficult to confirm, but the imagery of the chaff being carried away (כֶּשֶׂאֵף) by a tempest (תַּעֲרֹץ) does remind us of Isa 40:24, where the same imagery is employed precisely to undercut the conceit of the earthly rulers. Nevertheless, we should avoid too precise historical interpretations, because the nations and their deities are always closely linked together in Isaiah 40-55. Thus we cannot agree with Westermann that

'Deutero-Isaiah's real intention was to say, in a deliberately cryptic way, that God is proclaiming to Israel, "Behold, I make of you an instrument capable of overcoming the obstacles set up by your foes, which separate you from your homeland' (1966:65).

Taken together with Isa 41:11-12, vv.15-16 must also refer to Israel's enemies. Schoors is correct in saying that Westermann is only evading the problem, for 'even this explanation cannot be dissociated from the enemies

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<sup>15</sup> See Whybray, who remarks that '[t]he metaphor is a curious one' (1975:65), or Westermann, who observes that '[t]he metaphor of threshing in v.15a fits. . .not with the object "mountains and hills" in 15b' (1966:65).

activity' (1973:65-66). However, we do not think these enemies, as Schoors argues, are 'the small neighbouring nations' only, otherwise the dimension of the deities' power would be irrelevant. Nothing less than a complete reversal of Israel's fortunes is promised in this oracle of salvation: puny Israel is to be empowered by his God, whereas his adversaries are shown to be transient and weak before YHWH, who is alone the powerful redeemer ready to help Israel. The predominant theme of power in this pericope is even more unequivocally brought out when the oracle is read within its literary context; the subtle contrast between YHWH's sovereignty and the idols' impotence serves as the assurance of the promise that Israel will receive help and strength while his enemies are doomed to total nullity. Whether the pericope is a war oracle issued to the community as king (Conrad 1985:104-108) must depend on how far the conflict is expected to be overcome by the people themselves. Here we must turn to the other oracles of salvation for more information.

### 5.3 Isaiah 43:1-7

יְעִתָּה כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה<sup>01</sup>      בְּרָאָה יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְרָה יִשְׂרָאֵל

אֶל-תִּירָא כִּי גִאֲלִיתִיךָ      קָרָאתִי בְשֵׁמִי לִי-אֶתָּה:

וּבְנֵהְרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁפּוּךְ  
וְלִהְבֵּה לֹא תִבְעַר-בָּךְ:  
קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעַךְ

<sup>02</sup> כִּי-תַעֲבֹר בַּמַּיִם אֶתְּךָ-אֲנִי  
כִּי-תֵלֵךְ בַּמּוֹ-אֵשׁ לֹא תִכָּהַר  
<sup>03</sup> כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

כּוֹשׁ וְסָבָא תַחֲתֶיךָ:  
נִכְבְּדָתָ וְאֲנִי אֶהְבֶּתִיךָ  
וְלְאֲמִים תַּחַת נַפְשֶׁךָ:

נִתְתִּיר כְּפָרְךָ מִצָּרִים  
<sup>04</sup> מִמָּאֲשֶׁר יִקְרָתָ בְּעֵינַי  
וְאֵתָן אָדָם תַּחֲתֶיךָ

וּמִמַּעַרְב אֶקְבָּצֶךָ:  
וְלִתְיָמָן אֶל-תִּכְלְאִי  
וּבְנוֹתַי מִקֶּצֶה הָאָרֶץ:

<sup>05</sup> אֶל-תִּירָא כִּי אֶתְךָ-אֲנִי  
מִמִּזְרַח אָבִיא זֶרְעֶךָ  
<sup>06</sup> אֲמַר לְצִפּוֹן תִּנִּי  
הִבִּיאִי בְנֵי מִדְבָּר  
<sup>07</sup> כָּל הַנִּקְרָא בְּשִׁמִּי

וְצִרְתִּיר אֶת-עֲשִׂיתִיר:

וְלִכְבוֹדִי בָרְאִיתִיר

<sup>01</sup> But now thus said YHWH;

Your creator, O Jacob, and your shaper, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you,

I have called you by your name, you are mine.

<sup>02</sup> When you pass through the waters, I shall be with you,

And through the floods, they will not drown you;

When you go through fire, you will not be burned,

And flame will not consume you.

<sup>03</sup> For I am YHWH your God,

The Holy One of Israel, your saviour.

I have given Egypt (as) your ransom,

Kush and Saba in return for you.

<sup>04</sup>More than that<sup>16</sup> you are precious in my eyes,

You are honoured, and I myself have loved you.

And I shall give humanity<sup>17</sup> in return for you,

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<sup>16</sup> Maalstad (1966:513) challenges the legitimacy of translating מֵאֲשֶׁר here as 'because' (*weil* or *darum dass*), and he correctly notes that מֵאֲשֶׁר occurs otherwise nowhere in the Hebrew Bible with this meaning. He also points out that in Eccl 3:22 מֵאֲשֶׁר means 'more than that'. Cf. Josh 10:11; Judg 16:30; 2Sam 18:8; and 2Kgs 6:16. However, his further suggestion of מֵאֲשֶׁר (*mehr als Assur*) must be deemed too far-fetched to be worth considering.

<sup>17</sup> The conjectural emendations of either אֲדָמָה (countries) or אֲרִיִּים (islands) are scholarly attempts to improve on מ, whose אָדָם, looking a bit strange, nevertheless enjoys almost unanimous textual support. 6's ἀνθρώπους πολλούς (many peoples) and 7's עַמִּיּוֹת (peoples) appear to be interpretations rather than variant readings, while 2<sup>a</sup> has the ה added to אָדָם only above the line. Otherwise, 2<sup>b</sup>, 6, and 7 all support מ. Maalstad's suggestion (1966:513) to revocalize it as אֲדָם (Edom) is very attractive, for if we pay attention to Mal 1:2-5, Elliger's dismissal of it on the ground that 'certainly the meagre Edom appears after all very unlikely right beside the rich Egypt, Kush, and Saba' (1978:274) looks too hasty. However, even Maalstad himself admits that the name 'Edom' has always been

And peoples in return for your life.

<sup>05</sup> Do not fear, for I am with you;

From East I shall bring your seed,

And from West I shall gather you,

<sup>06</sup> I shall say to North: Give!

And to South: Do not withhold!

Bring my sons from afar,

And my daughters from the end of the earth,

<sup>07</sup> Everyone called by my name.

And whom for my glory I have created,

Whom I have shaped, whom indeed I have made.

Form-critics are more ready to acknowledge the unity of this pericope and its close link with the preceding one (Isa 42:18-25). Whybray appears to be in the minority when he chooses to follow von Waldow in seeing 'two quite separate salvation oracles' of vv.1-3a and vv.5a+3b-7, while at the same time insisting on the

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written in full as אֱלֹהִים, and in view of the apparent lack of textual evidence, his opinion that 'the defective writing could just as well be coming from a later copyist who perhaps wrote by dictation from the original author or redactor' (514) remains an academic hypothesis. Thus מ is to be preferred, with אֱלֹהִים understood in the collective sense.

view that the beginning וְעַתָּה 'refers back not to the previous passage but to an unrecorded lamentation to which this oracle is a reply' (1975:82). Schoors prefers to view vv.1-4 and 5-7 as two distinct oracles as well, but he quickly concedes the difficulty in arriving at a definite conclusion concerning their original connection and grants a high degree of probability to the thesis of their original unity (1973:76). On the other hand, Westermann considers vv.1-4 and 5-7 as two parts of one single oracle, with וְעַתָּה as a deliberate contrast to 42:18-25 (1966:95). Elliger (1978:275-277) and Melugin have both come to the same conclusion that the pericope actually consists of three instead of just two parts, namely, vv.1-3a, 3b-4, and 5-7. Here Melugin's reasoning is worth our attention in particular:

'The separation of v.1-7 into three parts is reinforced by an examination of the content. In v.1-3a Israel is promised that Yahweh will be with her during the ordeal of fire and water. This complex of images comes to an end, however, with the substantiation in v.3a; v.3b-4 use completely different images in the announcement that Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba are given as a ransom in exchange for Israel's life. Again in v.5 the imagery shifts; now we are told that Yahweh will gather Israel from the four directions' (1976:105).

While we totally agree that such a tripartite reading of



Isa 43:1-7 is much more satisfactory than a binary approach, not to mention the arbitrary rearrangement or deletion of texts which go with the latter, it is yet possible to analyse the pericope in an even more precise manner.

The isolation of vv.3b-4 to form a single sub-unit enables us to see a parallel in both vv.2-3a and vv.5b-6. These three promises of salvation all contain three poetic lines respectively, and each of the promises focuses on a particular dimension of divine deliverance: the first one (vv.2-3a) relates to YHWH's protection of his people against fire and waters, the second one (vv.3b-4) highlights YHWH's love and thus his willingness to pay any ransom for Israel, while the third one (vv.5b-6) depicts YHWH's authority in commanding the release of his children from anywhere in the world. The three metaphors have not been chosen at random. On the contrary, they unmistakably remind us of the imprisonment (Isa 42:22), the kidnapping (42:24), and the burning fire (42:25) in the preceding pericope, only in the reverse order. Elliger may perhaps have gone a bit too far by treating Isa 42:18-43:7 as one single pericope; nevertheless, it is once again beyond any doubt that the oracle of salvation must be read within its literary context.

Apart from the three promises of salvation, there are also two assurances to be located in v.1b and vv.5a and 7a $\alpha$ , and it is the parallelism between them that has helped our identification:

v.1ba $\alpha$	אֶל-תִּירָא כִּי	v.5a	אֶל-תִּירָא כִּי
v.1b $\beta$	קָרָאתִי בְשֵׁמִי	v.7a $\alpha$	הִנֵּקְרָא בְשֵׁמִי

The tricky bit with the assurances is that whereas the first one appears as expected between the address and the first two promises, the second one is split up into two half-lines surrounding the third promise. Such an enclosure is not only possible, but is in fact mirrored in a larger scale between the introduction (v.1a) and the conclusion (v.7a $\beta$ +b) of the oracle. The motif of YHWH as Israel's creator, found only in these two half verses, firmly unites the beginning and closing parts together, and in the light of the repetitions of the two verbs, בָּרָא (to create) and יָצַר (to shape), v.7a $\beta$ +b may be considered actually a continuation of the address in v.1a rather than the *Ziel* of the oracle.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Among the three cases cited by Schoors (1973:47) as examples of the *Ziel* of a *Heilsorakel*, namely, Isa 41:16b; 43:7; and 54:5, our present verse is the only valid one because of its apparent independence from what is preceding it. But that leaves only one unique presence of the *Ziel* in five or six oracles of salvation, thus rendering its identification very doubtful. On the other hand, the change of the

Consequently, in this pericope we have once again identified the same three elements of an oracle of salvation, namely, the address, the assurances, and the promises.

The separation of two distinct promises in the middle of v.3 suggests further that we should understand YHWH as Israel's saviour (מִשִּׁיעַ; v.3a) to be related not so much to his paying ransom for his people (vv.3b-4), but rather to his delivering them from all kinds of hostile forces (v.2). Although the etymology of this word מִשִּׁיעַ remains controversial,<sup>19</sup> it seems that Sawyer's argument for its 'forensic connotations' in the three Isaianic texts is difficult to sustain.<sup>20</sup> Even if

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pronominal suffixes from the second to the third person singular within the address is likewise found in Isa 44:1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Both North (1964:120) and Schoors (1973:72) refer to the root meaning of יָשַׁע (to save) as being 'spacious', but it has been categorically denied by Sawyer (1965:475; 1968:20; and 1972 *passim*), yet defended with equal vehemence by Elliger (1978:296-297). For further discussions on the wider issue of etymology and root-meanings in Biblical semantics, see Sawyer (1967) and Barr (1961:107-160).

<sup>20</sup> The three texts are Isa 43:3, 11; and 45:20-22. Despite Elliger's sharp criticism, Sawyer continues to hold on to the view that Isa 43:3-4 'represent the

v.3 were to belong together, there would still be insufficient evidence to see a 'legal' process whereby YHWH arranges an exchange for Israel's freedom, and it is therefore justified to ask, 'Is the legal process not an eisegesis instead of an exegesis?' (Elliger 1978: 297). Moreover, Elliger is also right in pointing out that the following trial speech pericope, to which Isa 43:11-12 belong, has nothing to do with a forensic defence of the wrongly accused Israel, for whom an advocate in the person of the divine 'saviour' is required.<sup>21</sup> It is not so much YHWH who is appearing in court on behalf of Israel but rather Israel who is summoned to bear witness to YHWH's claim of being the only 'saviour' supreme in his power. The same motif of YHWH's sovereignty also dominates Isa 45:20-22, where YHWH challenges the nations to acknowledge him again to

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"Saviour" arranging a legal transaction. . .in exchange for Israel's freedom', and that Isa 43:12 'indicates that "saving" can consist of speaking up on behalf of someone like an advocate in a court of law' (1986:73). There is unfortunately no room for a scholarly reply to Elliger in this briefer commentary of Sawyer.

<sup>21</sup> But we disagree with Elliger's opinion that וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי in 43:12 is no more than a *Fehlschreibung* for the following וְהוֹשַׁמְעִתִּי. Based on the chiastic structure of 43:9b-13, we are more inclined to defend the integrity of v.12a, where we need three verbs to balance the other trio in v.10bα.

be the only 'saviour' able to save. In both trial speeches, the metaphors as well as the contexts are all related to YHWH's incomparability and his absolute power vis-à-vis the idols. Consequently, we may perhaps be more appropriately talking about a polemical rather than a forensic meaning in YHWH's self-designation as Israel's 'saviour', and this feature becomes salient especially when the oracle of salvation (Isa 43:1-7) is read together with the ensuing trial speech (43:8-13).

On the other hand, the use of מוֹשִׁיעַךְ (your saviour) as the concluding word for the first promise echoes loudly one of the key verbs, גָּאֵלְתִּיךָ (I have redeemed you), in the preceding assurance (v.1ba). It has been pointed out that among the thirteen occurrences of קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל (the Holy One of Israel) in Isaiah 40-55, ten are connected with גָּאֵל (redeemer).<sup>22</sup> Isa 43:3a is the only time where the epithet 'the Holy One of Israel' is found with מוֹשִׁיעַ instead of גָּאֵל, and the verb גָּאֵלְתִּיךָ (and I have redeemed you) appears two verses apart from it. But perhaps we should understand מוֹשִׁיעַ to be the

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<sup>22</sup> See Holmgren (1963:187). He lists the ten occurrences as Isa 41:14-16 (*bis*); 43:1-3, 14-15 (*bis*); 47:4; 48:17; 49:7 (*bis*); and 54:4. The other three are Isa 41:20; 45:11; and 55:5. We may dispute with him over 43:3, but the proportion remains overwhelming.

synonym of <sup>ל</sup>נָחַם here, just as in Isa 49:26 and 52:9-10 the two roots are again used almost interchangeably.<sup>23</sup> Thus the promise (43:2-3a) delineating the superior protection from YHWH the unique 'saviour' functions as an elaboration on the assurance (43:1b) that YHWH has redeemed his people.

While YHWH's sovereignty over the nations is indeed assumed in the next promise (43:3b-4),<sup>24</sup> his love for Israel appears to be the more outstanding theme here. Whybray is certainly correct when he remarks,

'But the real ruler of all these lands, as of the whole world, is Yahweh, and as such he is able to offer their temporal rule to Cyrus in return for the freedom of the Jews. The concept is a highly poetical one intended to express the extreme lengths to which Yahweh will go for the sake of his people Israel. It would be wrong to subject it to a strict logical scrutiny' (1975:83).

The fact that this second promise is distinct from the first one contradicts North's idea that the meaning of

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<sup>23</sup> In Pss 72:13-14 and 106:10, these two roots are employed in parallel, suggesting that both of them may have belonged to a core group of salvation vocabulary.

<sup>24</sup> Westermann has aptly observed that 'it is here taken for granted that God, the God of vanquished Israel, is at work in the great political changes afoot in the world of the day' (1966:97).

מִשְׁעָר in v.3a is now being explained in graphic details of how 'Yahweh will give the rich lands of Africa as the price of his people's ransom' (1964:120). But there is a definite link between YHWH ready to pay for Israel's freedom and YHWH the גֹּאֲלֵי of Israel.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the second promise (vv.3b-4) may be taken as a further elaboration on another important dimension of YHWH being Israel's 'redeemer'. Whereas in the first promise it is the supreme power of the unique redeemer which is being highlighted, here the focus of attention is shifted to the loving relationship between YHWH the redeemer and his fellow kinsmen, and the relationship is so close that it has become an obligation for YHWH to ransom his own people at all cost.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In discussing the prophetic allusions to the responsibilities of the kinsman-redeemer, Holmgren observes that 'Yahweh is the "nearest relative" of Israel, and therefore the responsibility falls upon him to redeem his people, to restore their freedom and right' (1963:80).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. McKenzie's comment: 'The line does not mean that Yahweh readily sacrifices any people to preserve Israel; Second Isaiah is more subtle than that. It means that whatever price is necessary to redeem Israel, Yahweh is prepared to pay. . . .' (1968:51). Schoors also points out that '[t]he greatness of Yahweh's love is made concrete by the immense ransom, which he is ready to pay' (1973:73).

In order that YHWH's sovereignty is not compromised in the poetic metaphor of his being subject to paying ransom for Israel, the oracle continues with a third promise (vv.5b-6), in which we are reminded at the same time of both YHWH's supreme authority as well as his parental relationship with Israel. The release and home-coming of the people of Israel will be accomplished by YHWH's verbal command without the need for any transaction or bargain (cf. Isa 45:13 and 52:3). Those who will return from the far corners of the earth are the sons and daughters of YHWH. They are the ones called or summoned (קָרָא) through the power and love of YHWH. Hence we not only find in these three promises of the salvation oracle a unifying development of the single motif of YHWH the redeemer, but also observe the integrity between the assurances and the promises, with the latter elaborating on the former.

Why then is YHWH also described as Israel's creator in the enclosing clauses of the oracle (vv.1a and 7aβ+b)? Westermann is certain that

'the words can only mean, "who created you as a nation, that is, by delivering you from Egypt and leading you through the wilderness and bringing you into the promised land". The creating and forming would then refer to an actual historical



act of God, the saving act by which he brought Israel into being' (1966:96).

But Elliger is equally sure that creation here must refer to 'a repeated intervention in the course of things like the liberation of Israel now from foreign control. Redemption to freedom is creation. . . Here in 43:1 the speech is about such a creative redemption' (1978:293). Despite their common desire to interpret YHWH's acts of creation and salvation as one and the same, scholars often find that the prophetic texts remain quite open as to what this divine act of creation of Israel actually means in its context. Thus a re-examination of the situation is deemed necessary.

The word **וְלִכְבוֹדִי** (and for my glory) in v.7a $\beta$  deserves special attention, since it is the only extra piece of information offered in close relation to the creation verbs. The appearance of **כְּבוֹדִי** (my glory) in Isa 42:8 and 48:11 both clearly refer to the polemics against the idols. The same polemical concern may in fact lie behind YHWH's declaration here in v.7b, for **יָצַר** (to shape) and **עָשָׂה** (to make) are also the two verbs employed by the prophet to describe the 'shaping' and 'making' of the idols.<sup>27</sup> We have already noted in Isa 41:8-16 the intentional comparison between YHWH's

<sup>27</sup>

See Isa 44:9, 12-13, 15, 17, 19; and 46:6.

'strengthening', 'helping', and 'choosing' Israel on the one hand and the idol worshippers 'helping', 'strengthening', and 'choosing' their deities on the other. What a similar and yet more poignant contrast between YHWH who 'makes' and 'shapes' Israel and the idols which must be 'made' and 'shaped' by the hands of the craftman!<sup>28</sup>

A second clue to the meaning of YHWH's creating Israel is the clustering of the three verbs, בָּרָאֵתִיר (I have created him), יָצַרְתִּיר (I have shaped him), and עָשִׂיתִיר (I have made him) in v.7aβ+b. The other two occurrences of all these three verbs together are Isa 45:7 and 18, where the contexts are once again the incomparability of YHWH and his sovereignty. In Isa 45:7 it is quite clear that the main thrust of the announcement lies in the very last clause of v.7. YHWH creates (בָּרָא), shapes (יָצַר), and makes (עָשָׂה); in fact,

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<sup>28</sup> Spykerboer in his view that the four passages of polemics against idolatry (Isa 40:18-20; 41:7; 44:9-20; and 46:5-7) 'are intimately rooted in their context and cannot be separated from it' (1976:185) apparently misses these paradigmatic contrasts, though he does comment on the continuation of the motif of power (in the verb חָזַק) from Isa 41:6-7 to 41:8ff, and the antithesis there between 'the strength and help given by Yahweh to his people. . .[and] the nothingness and powerlessness of Israel's opponents' (69).

he is the one God 'who makes all these'. In Isa 45:18 YHWH is introduced as the creator-God who sits reigning over the heavens and the earth. Seen against the background of these two statements, YHWH's concluding declaration in Isa 43:7 that he has 'created', 'shaped', and 'made' Israel may well imply that he is the sovereign God responsible for everything happening to Israel. Such an affirmation reminds us of the rhetorical question raised in the preceding pericope, 'Who has given Jacob for plundering, and Israel for robbers? Was it not YHWH?' (Isa 42:24a). Consequently, the identification of YHWH as Israel's creator does not refer to a particular historical event, nor should it be understood as a variation of the motif of YHWH's acts of redemption. At the same time, Schoors must be deemed incorrect when he twice states that it is 'the personal relationship' between the Creator and his creature that is being expressed in the beginning and the end of this oracle (1973:70 and 76). The depiction of YHWH as the creator of Israel rather points to the unique supremacy of YHWH as the God who alone decides everything. It is in this theme of YHWH's sovereignty that the two motifs of his being the creator and redeemer of Israel find their coherence, and that the oracle of salvation sustains its unity among its three elements of the address, the assurances, and the promises.

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחַרְתִּי בּוֹ:	<sup>01</sup> וְעַתָּה שְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב עַבְדִּי
וַיֵּצֵרָה מִבֶּטֶן יַעֲזֹרָה	<sup>02</sup> כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה
וַיִּשְׁרֹן בְּחַרְתִּי בּוֹ:	אֶל-תִּירָא עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב
וְנִזְלִים עַל-יִבְשָׁה	<sup>03</sup> כִּי אֶצְקֶ-מַּיִם עַל-צָמָא
וּבְרַכְתִּי עַל-צֹאצְאֶיהָ:	אֶצְקֶ רוּחִי עַל-זֶרְעָהּ
כַּעֲרֻכִּים עַל-יִבְלֵי-מָיִם:	<sup>04</sup> וְצִמְחֻוּ בְּבֵין תְּצִיר
וְזֶה יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם-יַעֲקֹב	<sup>05</sup> זֶה יֹאמַר לַיהוָה אֲנִי
וּבְשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְנֶה:	וְזֶה יִכְתֹּב יָדּוֹ לַיהוָה
וְגֵאלּוֹ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת	<sup>06</sup> כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל
וּמִבְלָעַדִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים:	אֲנִי רֹאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרוֹן
וּבְגִידָהּ וּבַעֲרֻכָּהּ לִי	<sup>07</sup> וּמִי-כְמוֹנִי יִקְרָא
וְאֶתִיּוֹת וְאֲשֶׁר תִּבְאֲנָה	מִשׁוּמִי עַם-עוֹלָם
<sup>08</sup> אֶל-תִּפְתָּדוֹ וְאֶל-תִּרְהוֹ	וּבִידּוֹ לָמוֹ:
וְהַגִּדְתִּי וְאִתָּם עַדִּי	חֵלָא מֵאֵז הִשְׁמַעְתִּיהָ
וְאֵין צוּר כָּל-יָדְעָתִי:	הָרַשׁ אֱלֹהִהּ מִבְלָעַדִּי

<sup>01</sup> But now hear! Jacob, my servant;  
And Israel - I have chosen him.

<sup>02</sup> Thus said YHWH your maker,  
And your shaper from womb, he will help you:

Do not fear, my servant Jacob,

And Jeshurun - I have chosen him.

<sup>03</sup>For I shall pour waters upon a thirsty one,

And rains upon a dry place;

I shall pour my spirit upon your seed,

And my blessing upon your offspring.

<sup>04</sup>And they will sprout [like scions] of reed,<sup>29</sup>

Like willows by conduits of waters.

<sup>05</sup>This one will say: I am of YHWH,

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<sup>29</sup> The notorious *crux* of בְּבֵין הָעֵצִים has generated a wide variety of scholarly emendations. Despite attempts to follow מ by de Boer (1956:14), Rignell (1956:41), and more recently Watts (1987:140), it remains unusual to see the unique juxtaposition of ב with בֵּין here, especially when a number of Hebrew Mss, Q<sup>a</sup>, S, and X all attest to כ instead of ב. On the other hand, the conjectural reading of בְּבֵין מִים הָעֵצִים (like grass between waters) from S's ὥσει χορτος ἀνα μέσον ὑδάτος, although accepted by many, is odd in its separating the particle of comparison כ from הָעֵצִים. Another very attractive proposal by Allegro (1951:156) is to read בְּבֵין הָעֵצִים (like the green ben tree), but it is still unsatisfactory to find a singular noun following a plural verb וַצִּמְחָו. Our proposal of reading בְּבֵין הָעֵצִים (like scions of reed) is based on Elliger's observation (1978:363-364 and 390-391) that X had probably read from its *Vorlage* בְּנֵי, which by metathesis became בֵּין in מ, and that הָעֵצִים should be understood not as 'grass' but 'reed' according to the root הָעֵצִים III in KB.

And this one will call by the name of Jacob;  
 And this one will inscribe [on]<sup>30</sup> his hand: of YHWH,  
 And by the name of Israel he will surname himself.

<sup>06</sup> Thus said YHWH, the king of Israel,  
 And his redeemer, YHWH of hosts:

I am first and I am last,  
 And apart from me there is no God.

<sup>07</sup> And who is like me? Let him proclaim,  
 And let him declare it and set it forth to me.  
 From my establishing a people of antiquity,<sup>31</sup>  
 And future things and those which are coming -

Let them declare to him,

<sup>08</sup> Do not dread and do not [fear].<sup>32</sup>

Was it not in time past I announced to you,  
 And declared, and you are my witnesses?

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<sup>30</sup> The preposition ב has probably been dropped off because of haplography.

<sup>31</sup> מ is not necessarily corrupt here, and the very attractive emendation of מִי הַשְׁמִיעַ מֵעוֹלָם אוֹתִיּוֹת (North 1964:135) must be seen as an improvement of the text by modern scholarship without any support from the ancient versions.

<sup>32</sup> Our translation follows תִּירָאוּ of ב<sup>a</sup>. מ's תִּירָאוּ assumes either the root ירה, which is a *hapax*, or the root ירהק, which is unknown.

Is there a God apart from me?

And there is no rock, none have I known.

The opening address (v.1) of this oracle of salvation greets Israel as the servant chosen by YHWH. It is then expanded by the messenger formula (v.2a), in which YHWH is introduced as Israel's maker and helper. Because these motifs have already been explored before in the two previous pericopae (Isa 41:8-16 and 43:1-7), we shall only add here two further observations. Firstly, the two motifs mentioned above appear in the addresses of the previous two oracles independent of each other, but now they have been joined together in close proximity. A similar understanding of YHWH as Israel's maker and Israel as YHWH's servant closely related to each other is exemplified in Isa 44:21b, when YHWH says, 'I have shaped you, servant of mine you are'; as well as in Isa 49:5aα, where YHWH is called the one 'shaping me from womb to be his servant'. Judging from Isa 49:3, the speaker here is undoubtedly Israel. Secondly, the link of this oracle with the preceding pericope is expressed not only in the first word וְעַתָּה,<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup>

Melugin observes that

'[p]ast and future are contrasted, however, when 43,22-28 and 44,1-5 are placed side by side: The annihilation of ancestors in the past contrasts with the abundance of posterity in the future. The particle וְעַתָּה

but also in the last word **יִעֲזָרֶךָ** (he will help you) of the opening address. Whereas in Isa 43:27-28 YHWH is said to be responsible for Israel's exile because their first father has sinned, now YHWH promises to 'help' by pouring out his blessing upon their offspring. Once again the reversal of Israel's fortune is based clearly on YHWH's sovereignty, which forms the core of the introduction to the content of the salvation oracle.

The promise of salvation to Israel is delineated in vv.2b-5 in two distinct yet related metaphors, namely, the outpouring of YHWH's life-giving spirit as waters upon a dry land (v.3), and the joy and excitement of Israel's revitalized growth as willows by the waterside (vv.4-5). The focus of transformation is upon the revival of the people of Israel, and there is no reason to bring in either the physical environment (i.e., the desert) or the proselytes, although these are both legitimate motifs in other passages of Isaiah 40-55.<sup>34</sup> **צָמָא** (a thirsty one) and **יִבְשָׁה** (a dry place) refer to the barrenness of Israel, while the individuals who boast about their affiliation to YHWH must be Jacob's seed and offspring, for 'the context here calls for a

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(44,1) makes the connection between these two texts, expressing a relationship between past and future' (1976:116).

<sup>34</sup>

Cf. Isa 41:18-19; 43:19-20; 45:22-23; and 49:6.



description of Israelite reaction to God's new announcement' (Watts 1987:145), and the same gratifying response is reiterated again in pericopae like Isa 49:14-21 and 54:1-3.

Melugin tries to explain the absence of any *Begründung* clause by referring to the introduction, where 'the essence of that genre element [of substantiation] is included already', as '[t]he phrases, "your maker" and "your helper," appear here as expansions of the messenger formula in contrast to their role elsewhere as substantiations for "fear not"' (1976:115). Otherwise, Isa 44:1-5 appears to be a straightforward salvation oracle. However, it seems to us that the third element of assurance is to be located properly in vv.6b-8, which is introduced by a second messenger formula (v.6a) echoing the latter half of the opening address in v.2a. The designations of YHWH as king and redeemer of Israel are reminiscent of his being depicted as Israel's maker and helper in the first messenger formula, and both messenger formulae may be taken as expansions of the opening address (v.1) to draw attention to the two subsequent divine speeches (vv.2b-5 and 6b-8), which Israel is summoned to listen. Moreover, by following the prompting of the *athnach* in III (especially in vv.7-8; *pace BHS*), we have arrived at the same number of poetic lines in both speeches. Thus the

salvation oracle as a whole appears to have presented a balanced overall structure.

But the clinching argument for the integrity of Isa 44:1-8 lies in the content of vv.6b-8.<sup>35</sup> The focus of this divine speech is on the encouragement of Israel rather than the issue of YHWH's supremacy common in the trial speeches, for YHWH's incomparability is put forward not as the conclusion of a legal dispute but rather as the premise from where the arguments begin. Israel is here being reminded that in fact as YHWH's witnesses they are able to denounce any of YHWH's competitors in full confidence.<sup>36</sup> The challenge for anyone to declare his equality with YHWH must be understood as an ironic taunt and not as a summons to formal legal proceedings,<sup>37</sup> while it is rather Israel who

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<sup>35</sup> While most commentators have noted in the middle of a supposed trial speech the presence of elements of salvation oracle such as the messenger formula and the word of encouragement (v.8aa), it is McKenzie who alone sees Isa 44:1-8 as a unity (1968:62-65).

<sup>36</sup> We take יְגִידָהּ in v.7b together with v.8a as YHWH's encouragement directed towards Israel, who is first alluded to in v.7ay as עַם-עוֹלָם, and then in v.8ay addressed in plural as YHWH's witnesses.

<sup>37</sup> Spykerboer warns against the conditioning of form-critics in reading a legal sense in the verb עָרַךְ, which is 'rather a general term used in an argument, a

will declare to him concerning YHWH's sovereignty, for YHWH alone has declared over past and future events. They may be certain of YHWH's promise of salvation precisely because of their understanding of YHWH being the only 'rock' who has the power to help them. The rhetoric of the salvation oracle undoubtedly depends heavily on the content of the trial speeches, and it demonstrates the close connection between the two genres in their literary context. Read as the element of assurance in a salvation oracle, the unit of vv.6b-8 no longer displays any ambiguity in terms of its formal characteristics. Furthermore, the three distinctive elements of address, promise, and assurance once again are found to be united together in an oracle of salvation.

Duhm's suggestion that Isa 44:21-22 should be joined with vv.6-8 to form a single unit is based on the assumption that Isa 44:9-20 is a secondary interpolation (1892:310). His proposal is followed by Westermann (1966:113-114) but rejected by Schoors (1973:232). Our examination of the salvation oracles shows their close relationship with the polemics against

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debate or confrontation' (1976:114), and carries the nuance of comparison in the context of the incomparability of YHWH.

the idols, and hence the likelihood of the latter as part of the original message of the prophet. Our argument for Isa 44:1-8 as a self-contained pericope further renders the addition of Isa 44:21-22 unnecessary. Moreover, the additional address in v.21a, the motif of divine forgiveness, and the admonition in v.22 are foreign to a salvation oracle. Despite the repetition in v.21b of YHWH's shaping Israel to be his servant, which seems to have strengthened its link with Isa 44:1-2, the short passage Isa 44:21-22 is best taken together with v.23 as a concluding word of exhortation before a new section in which our attention is drawn to a new subject: Cyrus the anointed of YHWH.

## 5.5 Isaiah 54:1-10

כִּי־רַבִּי עָקְרָהּ לֹא יִלְדָּה <sup>01</sup>	פָּצְתִי רֶבֶּה וְצִמְלִי לֹא־תָלָה
כִּי־רַבִּים בְּנֵי־שׁוֹמְמָה	מִבְּנֵי בְּעוּלָה אָמַר יְהוָה:
תִּרְחִיבִי מְקוֹם אֶתְלָךְ <sup>02</sup>	וִירִיעוֹת מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ יִטּוּ אֶל־תַּחֲשֻׁכֶּיךָ
תֹּאדִירֶיךָ מִיִּתְרוֹךְ וִיתְדוֹתֶיךָ תִּזְקְרִי:	כִּי־רָמִין וְשִׁמְאוֹל תִּפְרָצִי <sup>03</sup>
וְזִרְעֶיךָ גִּזְרִים יִרְקֹשׁ	וְעָרִים נְשֻׁמוֹת יוֹשִׁיבוּ:
אֶל־תִּירָאֲעֲלֹמֶיךָ אֵל תִּבּוֹשִׁי <sup>04</sup>	וְאֶל־תִּקְלָמִי כִּי לֹא תַחֲפִירִי
כִּי בִשֶׁת עֲלֹמֶיךָ תִּשְׁכַּחֲתִי	וְתִרְפַּת אֶלְמִנּוּתֶיךָ לֹא תִזְכְּרִי־עוֹד:
כִּי בַעֲלֶיךָ עֲשֹׂהָ <sup>05</sup>	יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ
וְגִאֲלָךְ קְדוֹשׁ וְשָׂרָאֵל	אֱלֹהֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וְקָרָא:

קָרָאָהּ יְהוָה	כִּי-כָאֵשָׁה עֲזוּבָה בְּעֶצְרוּכָת רִיחַ <sup>06</sup>
אָמַר אֱלֹהֶיהָ:	וְאֵשֶׁת בְּעוֹרִים כִּי תִמָּאֵס
וּבְכֻזָּמִים גְּדֹלִים אֶקְבְּצֶהּ:	בְּרֹבַע קִטָּן עֲזָבְתִּיהָ <sup>07</sup>
כָּפִי רֹבַע מִמֶּנּוּ	בְּשֹׁאֵף קֶצֶף הִסְתַּרְתִּי <sup>08</sup>
אָמַר גְּאֻלָּהּ יְהוָה:	וּבְחֶסֶד עוֹלָם רִחַמְתִּיהָ
	כִּי-מִי בֵּחַ זֹאת לִי <sup>09</sup>
מִי-בֵּחַ עוֹד עַל-הָאָרֶץ	אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִעֶבֶר
וּמִגְּעֵר-בָּהּ:	כֵּן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִקֶּצֶף עָלֶיהָ
וְהִגְבַּעוֹת תִּמְוִטְנָהּ	כִּי הִתְרִים יְמוּשָׁה <sup>10</sup>
וּבְרִית שְׁלֹמִי לֹא תִמוּט	וְחֶסְדִּי מֵאֲתָךְ לֹא-יִמוּשׁ
אָמַר מְרֻחָמֶנּוּ יְהוָה:	

<sup>01</sup> Shout! O barren one - she has not given birth;

Burst out a cry and scream - she has not been in  
[labour!]

Indeed many more are sons of a desolate one,  
Than sons of a married one, said YHWH.

<sup>02</sup> Enlarge the place of your tent! [do not hold back!

And let the curtains of your dwellings spread out,  
Lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs!

<sup>3</sup> For right and left you will break through;  
And your seed will dispossess nations,  
And they will people desolated cities.

<sup>04</sup> Do not fear, for you will not feel ashamed,

Do not cringe, for you will not suffer disgrace.

Rather<sup>38</sup> the shame of your early life you will forget,  
 And the reproach of your widowhood you will  
 05 For your maker is your husband,<sup>39</sup> [remember no more.  
 His name is YHWH of hosts;  
 And the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer,<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> This is a *Ki-adversativum*; the motivation appears in v.5 only. See Schoors (1973:81) and Muilenburg (1961 *passim*).

<sup>39</sup> בְּעֲלִיָּךְ and עֲשִׂיָּךְ are, *pace* Watts (1987:235), not *plurales excellentiae* referring to God. Even in GKC §124k עֲשִׂיָּךְ is considered a 'doubtful' participle in the plural, and is better explained as an archaic singular form retaining the י of its root (עֲשִׂי < עֲשֵׂה). It would also be difficult to explain why גְּאֻלְיָךְ does not follow suit as it clearly refers to YHWH as well. On the other hand, North is probably right in seeing מ's spelling of בְּעֲלִיָּךְ as 'artificial, partly to avoid strong anthropomorphism, partly to avoid association with Baal' (1964:246). מ<sup>a</sup> has בַּעֲלִיכִי, the כִי- suffix being Aramaism according to Kutscher (1982:96). It lends support to North's opinion that 'the original spelling would be בְּעֲלִיָּךְ' (*ibid.*).

<sup>40</sup> We agree with Beuken, who, following the lead of Köhler, is of the opinion that גְּאֻלְיָךְ and בְּעֲלִיָּךְ must be the predicates of עֲשִׂיָּךְ and קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, but not vice versa. He argues that

'[i]t would be illogical to point out to the woman who has just been called unmarried and widow ([v.]4) the unique qualities of her husband and her kinsman. On the other hand, it is perfectly in keeping with the preceding encouragement to announce to this same woman that someone, in this case her Maker, will marry her,

The God of all the earth he is called.

<sup>06</sup>For as a deserted wife, and being hurt in spirit,

YHWH has called you;

And a wife of youth, though she is rejected,

Said your God.

<sup>07</sup>In a little moment I have deserted you,

But in great compassions I shall gather you.

<sup>08</sup>In a flood<sup>41</sup> of wrath I have hidden

My face a moment from you,

But in perpetual faithfulness I have had compassion on

Said your redeemer YHWH.

[you,

<sup>09</sup>[Like]<sup>42</sup> the waters of Noah is this to me:

Which I swore would not pass

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that the Holy One of Israel will act as her kinsman' (1974b:44).

It may be added that the two verbless clauses are syntactically not <sup>ones</sup> of identification but of description or classification, in which the predicate generally comes first (Waltke & O'Connor 1990:130-135, who quote Andersen 1970:31-34).

<sup>41</sup> Following the traditional view that שָׁטַף (a *hapax*) is a variant of שָׁטַף (flood); cf. Prov 27:4.

<sup>42</sup> Following the suggestion of BHS, we read כָּמִי instead of L's כִּי-מִי, which is difficult despite being supported by many Hebrew Mss. כִּי is apparently required by the following כִּי in v.9b, and is supported by several Mss together with Σ, Θ, Ξ, Ϟ, and Ϸ (cf. BHK's כִּי-מִי). Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that both יָמִי נָתַתְּ and מִי-נָתַתְּ are original to the verse.

[ ]<sup>43</sup> Again over the land;      [the waters of Noah]  
 So I have sworn not to be angry with you,  
 And not to rebuke you.  
<sup>10</sup>For the mountains may depart,  
 And the hills may shake;  
 But my faithfulness from with you will not depart,  
 And my covenant of peace will not shake.  
 Said your compassionate one YHWH.

Schoors appears to be overconfident when he avers to have 'recognize[d] in Is. liv 4-6 the structure of an oracle of salvation in the strict sense' (1973:81). On the contrary, Melugin has identified at least four indications that 'Deutero-Isaiah modifies the usual structure of the genre', and in his opinion '[t]his is without doubt a sign that v.4-6 are an imitation of the salvation-assurance oracle' (1976:170; author's emphasis). These modifications are, namely, the appearance of the substantiating clause in the imperfect (v.4a), the addressee being a female, the promise substantiated by a rather lengthy group of participial clauses (v.5), and the unusual presence of a set of clauses introduced by *ki* at the end of the pericope

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<sup>43</sup> Following §, we delete מִי-נָח, which looks like a gloss explaining כִּימִי נָח at the beginning of the verse, but subsequently being incorporated into the main text.



(v.6). However, according to our analysis of the genre of salvation oracles, this pericope seems to include vv.1-10, in which the three elements of address (v.1a), promise (vv.1b-3), and assurance (vv.4-10) are all present. The poetic continuity of Isa 54:1-10 has been well argued by Westermann (1966:218-219), with three consecutive divine speeches (vv.6, 7-8, and 9-10) elaborating on the climactic affirmation of v.5.

Unlike the oracles examined so far, this one is addressed not to Israel/Jacob but to an anonymous female figure depicted as 'a barren one' (v.1a). The anonymity facilitates the almost seamless transition from the barren mother to the deserted wife and ultimately to the afflicted city. There is no risk that the addressee may be mistaken for anyone apart from Zion, for the motif of Zion's expansion because of her children's return appears already in Isa 49:14-21, where Zion is mentioned unequivocally at the beginning of v.14a (וְהָאֵמֶר צִיּוֹן). The similar motifs of the return and the rapid increase of Israel's offspring are also the predominant themes in two of the three salvation oracles we have examined. It seems that we cannot deny *a priori* the legitimacy of a salvation oracle simply because it

is addressed to Zion and not Israel,<sup>44</sup> and we are here dealing not with two separate entities but only with stylistic variations of a single identity. Thus North's distinction that 'the emphasis is upon the increase of Zion's children *in*, rather than upon the return of her exiled children *to*, the homeland' (1964:247) must be deemed unnecessary.

Beuken observes that throughout Isa 54:1-6 the prophet is the speaker, and that '[t]he messenger formulae [vv.1by & 6bβ] put into God's mouth exclusively the lines which are immediately preceding' (1974b:32); hence they do not characterize the entire speech as the direct message of YHWH. But he seems to have gone a bit too far in postulating therefore that '[t]his particular use of the formula *citandi* leads to the effect that God, as it seems, is not present on the stage'. The idea of a gradual progress of YHWH's increasing presence throughout the entire chapter may sound interesting, but it appears to have contradicted the obvious tone of confidence and joy found both at the beginning of the

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Melugin's observation that '[w]e have no examples elsewhere in which Zion is the addressee in this genre, although the absence of numerous examples of this genre outside Deutero-Isaiah limits our knowledge of the original form' (1976:170).

chapter (vv.1-3) and the 'climactic' personal speech of YHWH in vv.11b-14a. The fact that the promise of salvation begins with one divine speech (v.1b $\beta$ ) and the assurance of salvation ends with three more (vv.6-10) suggests on the contrary a deliberate blurring effect between what is spoken by the prophet and what is spoken by YHWH. Read as a whole, the pericope of vv.1-10 does not stand out as a distinctly 'human' utterance, but is anchored firmly in YHWH's speeches as the ground for rejoicing.

The promise of salvation (vv.1b $\beta$ -3) begins with YHWH's declaration of a barren woman becoming a prolific mother. Beuken recognizes the motif of a change of fortune from sterility to fertility as a result of divine intervention is a common one especially within the wisdom tradition, and suggests that the recurrent experience of YHWH's pity for the childless women within Israel has now become a promise to the community at large (1974b:40-42). The desolation of the woman (שׁוֹמֵמָה; v.1b $\beta$ ) at the beginning is explicitly linked to the desolation of the cities (בְּשׁוֹמֵמָה; v.3b $\beta$ ) at the end of the promise. The abundant increase of the seed of the community and the reversal of strength between YHWH's people and the nations are familiar motifs already encountered in the salvation oracles before. In this particular pericope, mother Zion is both summoned to

rejoice and ordered to get ready by enlarging her dwellings in response to YHWH's promise of help.

The assurance of salvation (v.4) is based upon an affirmation (v.5) elaborated through three successive sayings of YHWH (vv.6-10). The affirmation of YHWH's commitment to his people does not easily pass over the calamities of the exile. In these speeches YHWH admits that he has indeed 'deserted' Zion 'for a little while' (v.7a), and that 'in a flood of wrath' he has 'hidden his face' from her (v.8a). Such graphic images are also evident in the allusions to Zion's 'shame of early life',<sup>45</sup> and 'reproach of widowhood' (v.4b). The anthropomorphic hyperbole appears to have been pushed to its possible extremes in this final instance in order to keep in touch with the realistic sense of despair among the people of YHWH. It is amidst these painful sentiments that v.5 transpires as 'the most fundamental *Trostgrund* of the whole oracle' (Schoors 1973:83).

Zion is being reminded categorically of the fact that she does have a husband, and even if she had

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<sup>45</sup> The attempt of Schoors to interpret עֲלִימָן as 'your bondage' (1973:82) is not only uncalled for, but also risks being prosaic among some very colourful poetic imagery.

indeed become a widow, she would still have had a redeemer (v.5). The apparent discrepancy between YHWH's dual role as husband and redeemer vanishes once the statement is understood in the light of its emotional impact rather than its logical coherence. Moreover, the titles, 'YHWH of hosts' and 'the God of all the earth' clearly point to the supreme sovereignty of YHWH. Zion is therefore further drawn to the recognition that her husband/redeemer is more than powerful enough to deliver her from her humiliation and <sup>the</sup> disgrace she has been suffering under her oppressor. But the most pregnant statement comes in the first three words of the verse: **כִּי בַעַלְיָךְ עֹשֶׂיךָ** (For he who makes you is your husband). The major theme of YHWH's unique sovereignty is present in a subtle yet compelling manner amidst the motif of his overwhelming love for his people. It is reiterated in the comparison between YHWH's control over the flood of Noah and his restraint of wrath towards Zion (v.9). Consequently, Zion may certainly rest assured in YHWH's promise of salvation because of her confidence in the power of her loving husband (v.10).

Thus, despite some irregularities, the pericope of Isa 54:1-10 is a clear example of a salvation oracle containing the three elements of address, promise, and assurance. It shares with the other salvation oracles the common motifs of the

dramatic reversal of fortune for the people of YHWH resulting from his powerful saving intervention, which is motivated by his prevailing love for them. It is also closely affiliated to the pericope immediately following, and to it we shall now turn.

## 5.6 Isaiah 54:11-17

<sup>11</sup>עֲנִיָּה סֹעֶרָה לֹא נִחְמָה

וְיִסְדֹּתֶיךָ בְּסִפְיָרִים:	וְהָיָה אֲנֹכִי מְרִבִּיץ בְּפוּךְ אֲבָנֶיךָ
וְשַׁעֲרֶיךָ לְאֲבָנִי אֶקְדָּח	<sup>12</sup> וְשִׁמְתִּי כִדְכֹד שְׁמוֹשְׁתֶּיךָ
<sup>13</sup> וְכָל-בְּנֶיךָ לְמוֹדֵי יְהוָה	וְכָל-גְּבוּלֶךָ לְאֲבָנֵי-חֶפֶץ:
<sup>14</sup> בְּצִדְקָה תִּכְוֶנְגִּי	וְרֹב שָׁלוֹם בְּנֶיךָ:

וּמִמְחֶזֶה כִּי לֹא-תִכְרַב אֱלֹהֶיךָ:	כִּתְקִי מַעֲשֶׂק כִּי-לֹא תִירָאִי
מִי-גֵר אֶתָּה עָלֶיךָ וְפוּל:	<sup>15</sup> הֵן גֹּר יְגוּר אֶפֶס מֵאוֹתִי
נִפְחַ בָּאֵשׁ פֶּתֶם	<sup>16</sup> הֵן: אֲנֹכִי בְּרֵאתִי חֶרֶשׁ
וְאֲנֹכִי בְּרֵאתִי מִשְׁחִית לְתַבֵּל:	וּמוֹצִיא כָּלִי לְמַעֲשֶׂהוּ
	<sup>17</sup> כָּל-כָּלִי יוֹצֵר עָלֶיךָ לֹא יִצְלָח

וְכָל-לְשׁוֹן תִּקְוֶם-אֶתָּה לְמַשְׁפַּט תִּרְשִׁיעִי	זֹאת נִחְלַת עֲבָדֵי יְהוָה
וְצִדְקָתְךָ מֵאִתִּי נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה:	

<sup>11</sup>O afflicted, storm-tossed<sup>46</sup> one - she is not comforted!

<sup>46</sup> סֹעֶרָה is parsed in BDB (704a) as a *Qal* participle, in KB (663a) as a *Pual* perfect, and in GKC §52s as a

Look! I am laying with carbuncle<sup>47</sup> your stones,  
 And your foundations<sup>48</sup> with sapphires;  
<sup>12</sup>And I shall set your pinnacles of ruby,  
 And your gates of sparkling gems.  
<sup>13</sup>And all your border of precious jewels,  
 And all your sons will be taught ones of YHWH;  
<sup>14</sup>And great will be the peace of your sons,  
 In justice you shall be established.

Be far from oppression, for you shall not fear, [you.  
 And from terror, for it will not come near upon  
<sup>15</sup>If anyone really attacks, it will not be from me,

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*Pual* participle without the preformative **נִ**, but distinguished from the perfect by the long 'a' vowel in the final syllable. The last option is also supported by Mandelkern (1846:802b), and best suits the passive meaning required.

<sup>47</sup> The meaning of **פִּיזָה** is uncertain. Our translation follows **פ** and **פ**, which understand the word to be a byform of **נִפֶּזֶה**, and so does Rashi (Rosenberg 1989:433). The poetic context seems to require some precious stone like the ruby or sapphires rather than any 'dark cement' (BDB 806b) or 'Hartmörtel' (KB 754b).

<sup>48</sup> Repointing **מ** into **וִיסְדִיתֶךָ** after **נֶ**<sup>a</sup> and **פ**, because it fits better as a poetic parallel to both its first stich and the following line (Watts 1987:236).

Whoever will attack<sup>49</sup> you, upon you he will fall.  
<sup>16</sup>Look!<sup>50</sup> I myself have created a craftsman,  
 Who blows a fire of coal,  
 And who produces a tool for his deed,  
 And I myself have created a ravager to destroy.  
<sup>17</sup>Every weapon fashioned against you will not prosper,  
 And every tongue that rises with you for the  
 judgement you will condemn;  
 This is the possession of the servants of YHWH,  
 And their justice from me. Oracle of YHWH.

The pericope of Isa 54:11-17 is examined as a final example of the genre of salvation oracle because once again the three elements of address (v.11a), promise (vv.11b-14a), and assurance (vv.14b-17) are found in it. The female character addressed is nowhere mentioned by name, but she is now depicted more clearly as a city. Read in the context of the preceding oracle (Isa 54:1-10), the present pericope may easily be recognized as a continuation of the message of salvation

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<sup>49</sup>     Q<sup>a</sup> has גר' instead of מ's גר, and it makes better sense. The ׳ may well have been dropped because of haplography.

<sup>50</sup>     We follow the Qere, which is supported by Q<sup>a</sup>. The Ketiv may be the result of an inadvertent influence from the previous line.



proclaimed to Zion. The prophetic announcements are repeated in variations rather than being developed in a logical sequence. This explains why the address of v.11a appears to have ignored the comforting words just announced, and we should not draw from it the conclusion that the oracle is an originally independent unit.

The promise of salvation declares YHWH's intention of restoring Zion to her glory and honour. The extended metaphor of YHWH rebuilding the city with a wide range of exotic gemstones expresses the exuberant provisions of a loving husband in rehabilitating the status and dignity of his beloved wife. North's reference to an apparently daring figure of sex-appeal in the 'black cosmetic' (פִּיֶּה; v.11bα) is perhaps a bit too imaginative (1964:252), for though the motif of marital love is implicitly there, the emphasis of the imagery is never upon the self-embellishment of the wife. Moreover, the role of Zion as the mother is highlighted by the twice mentioning of her sons in v.13.<sup>51</sup> The respectability of the wife/mother depends decisively on the well-being of her sons, while both are

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<sup>51</sup> Despite the correction in Q<sup>a</sup> of בְּנֵיכִי (your sons) into בְּנֵי־בְנֵיכִי (your builders), M's repetitions of 'sons' should be kept in the light of YHWH being the sole builder of Zion.

established upon the sovereign power of YHWH the husband/father.

The assurance of salvation describes YHWH as the 'creator' of a craftsman who produces a weapon against Zion and the ravager who seek to destroy YHWH's servants (v.16-17). The repeated use of this particular verb בָּרָא deserves our full attention here. There is no indication of any sense of newness in the context, nor does the verb carry any nuance of intimate relationship between the creator and the human being he has created. The only plain connotation of בָּרָא as it is employed in v.16 is that of control and supremacy. Zion will no longer have to fear oppression or terror, for YHWH not only has distanced himself from her enemies (v.15a), he has also declared his sovereign power over them as their 'creator'. The phrase, 'a craftsman / who blows a fire of coal' (v.16a), undoubtedly alludes to the polemical caricature against the idols in Isa 44:12 *et al*; they are however not even worth mentioning now, as their maker is already rendered powerless before YHWH's ultimate sovereignty.

Thus YHWH as the creator is in control of everything, and it is his power as the sovereign God over both Zion and her enemies that guarantees the victory of Zion and her sons. The unique appearance of

the plural עֲבָדֵי יְהוָה (servants of YHWH) in v.17b $\alpha$  must refer to בְּנֵי יֵה (sons) in v.13 within the context of the entire oracle. The reversal of fortune happening to Zion is again a direct consequence of YHWH's supreme authority. The predominant theme of the oracle of salvation is that of the absolute power of YHWH.

## 5.7 Summary

After examining the five oracles of salvation in Isaiah 40-55, we may offer the following five crucial observations:

Firstly, the salvation oracles do share a common structure which contains the three elements of address, promise, and assurance. The more elaborate scheme proposed by Westermann remains however a theoretical conjecture which not even one oracle fits. On the other hand, it is equally wrong to deny the existence of any salvation oracle at all in Isaiah 40-55. Harner is certainly correct to notice that the salvation oracles do contain individual elements which may appear repeatedly or in different order. The formula, 'Do not fear', may be a helpful marker, but its presence does not necessarily signify the pericope to be a salvation oracle (cf. Isa 40:9-11 and 51:7-8). The recognition of a less complicated structure has also led

to a totally new demarcation of the five oracles of salvation in Isaiah 40-55.

Secondly, the salvation oracles are found to be closely linked with their neighbouring pericopae. They are immediate responses to the preceding disputation or trial speech as well as subtle echoes of the various passages of idol-polemics usually taken as secondary in Isaiah 40-55. Our explorations of the significant phrases concerning YHWH's 'strengthening', 'helping', 'choosing', 'creating', 'shaping', and 'making' Israel all show that the salvation oracles may suffer a severe loss of their implicit nuances if they are denied their *Sitz im Text*.

Thirdly, the oracles promise salvation as a radical reversal of Israel's fortune from defeat to victory, weakness to strength, and sterility to fertility. YHWH as Israel's saviour must be able to protect his people from the onslaughts of hostile forces, and that is why YHWH's power is constantly being contrasted against the impotence of the idols. YHWH's love for his people is also an important motif in the assurance of the oracles, but it seems to be of even greater importance to recognize this redeemer of Israel/Zion has indeed the sovereign power to help them amidst the genuine despair of the situation of exile.

Fourthly, three out of five salvation oracles (Isa 43:1-7; 44:1-8; and 54:1-10) describe YHWH as the creator of Israel, and a fourth one depicts him as the creator of Israel's enemies (Isa 54:11-17). It is not a reference to a particular historical act nor an allusion to a special relationship between the creator and the creature. The point is rather upon YHWH's sovereign control over everything that happens to Israel. The creation vocabulary once more serves the purpose of contrasting YHWH against the idols, which are made by human craftsmen. Creation and redemption both involve God overcoming the forces of evil; the prophet is not interested in monotheism as a theoretical concept, but is more concerned with YHWH's efficacious sovereignty and saving power for his people.

Finally, the predominant theme of the oracles of salvation is once again that of YHWH's supreme authority and absolute sovereignty. Throughout the disputations, the trial speeches, and the salvation oracles, the focus is not so much the creating or saving acts of YHWH, but rather the question of who is in fact this sovereign creator and unique redeemer. Consequently, we are of the opinion that these are oracles of salvation rather than oracles of war. The irony remains that it is Israel in his weakness who

may experience YHWH's saving power and hence is able to witness to YHWH's unique sovereignty.

## CHAPTER 6

### POWER NOT NOVELTY

#### THE CONNOTATIONS OF בָּרָא IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

#### (AN EXCURSUS)

##### 6.1 Introduction

It almost sounds theologically commonplace to repeat the unanimous observation that as a verb used exclusively of God, בָּרָא (to create) expresses the uniquely divine act of bringing into existence something miraculous, wonderful, and new.<sup>1</sup> However, when YHWH declares to his people in Isa 54:16 that he himself has created their enemies, it seems that a consistent understanding of the verb בָּרָא may be more inclined towards the nuance of sovereign power and control than that of novelty or election. Our intention here is to ascertain how such an interpretation correlates with all the other occurrences of בָּרָא within the Hebrew Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> For literature on the meaning of בָּרָא, see *TDOT* 1 (1977:242), to which the two studies of Miguens (1974) and Angerstorfer (1979) should be added.

Well rehearsed are the facts that the verb בָּרָא appears predominantly (38 times) in its *Qal* form and less frequently (10 times) in its *Niphal* form,<sup>2</sup> with the majority of its usage found in Isaiah 40-55 (16 times) and the beginning of Genesis (11 times). In addition, it appears another eleven times within the prophetic literature, of which five are from the rest of the book of Isaiah. It also occurs six times in the Psalter, and is found once in each of the remaining books of the Pentateuch except Leviticus. Finally, apart from appearing once in Ecclesiastes, it is entirely absent in the wisdom writings. Judging from such a pattern of distribution, we may be justified to begin our survey on the meaning of בָּרָא from Isaiah 40-55.

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<sup>2</sup> There is a rare nominal form of בָּרִיאָה, which is a *hapax*. Because of their non-theological usage, the five occurrences of the *Piel* form (בָּרָא) together with the single appearance of the *Hiphil* infinitive (הִבְרִיא) will not be discussed. Despite their sharing of a common root, there seems to be no philological link between the *Qal* and *Niphal* forms on the one hand, and the *Piel* and *Hiphil* forms on the other. Cf. the three separate meanings assigned to these different forms of בָּרָא in Even-Shoshan (1985:202-203). Moreover, the adjective בָּרִיא (14 times), the Aramaic noun בָּרָא (8 times), and the proper name בָּרְאִיָּה may also be left safely outside our consideration.



## 6.2 Isaiah 40-55

Right in the middle of a prophetic disputation, YHWH is depicted as 'creator of the ends of the earth' (Isa 40:28). In fact, as we have pointed out, the focus of refutation begins precisely at this verse, arguing for YHWH's abundant power through the thrice repeated pair of key words, **יָעֵיף** and **יִגָּע**: he 'does not faint nor grow weary' (v.28a), but empowers those who 'faint and grow weary' (v.30a), so that those waiting for him 'will not faint nor grow weary' (v.31b). We have also argued that the same emphasis has also been crystallized in the dual epithets given to YHWH, and since the implications of YHWH as creator have already been fully explored in the previous pericopae (vv.12-20 and 21-26), the divine title can now afford a simple allusion without further elaboration. The earlier statement in v.26 clearly illustrates such a close link between the verb **בָּרָא** and divine power, for YHWH, who has created the heavenly hosts, is capable of commanding them 'because of abundant strength and mighty power'.

Similar conclusions may be drawn on two other instances where YHWH is referred to as the one 'creating the heavens', albeit at first sight they seem to be less straightforward. Isa 42:5 introduces YHWH as

creator in the expanded messenger formula, while the divine speech closes subsequently with the mentioning of 'the former things' and 'the new things' (v.9), just as the adjoining pericope starts immediately with an appeal to sing to YHWH 'a new song' (v.10). Does the reference to YHWH's creating activities constitute thereby a preamble to this concluding motif of 'newness'? Such a likelihood diminishes as we consider carefully the core of the divine speech, where YHWH is declared as 'calling' his servant 'with victory', 'upholding' his hand, 'guarding' him, and 'setting' him for a special task to the nations. We observe that all four verbs point undoubtedly to YHWH's sovereign power, and that these declarations are joined closely with the preceding descriptions of creating acts of YHWH by the self-identification phrase, 'I am YHWH' (v.6a). The same phrase reappears in v.8, with the emphasis being unmistakably on YHWH's 'glory' and 'praise', which are attested to by both 'former things' and 'new things'.

The second reference to YHWH as 'creating the heavens' appears in Isa 45:18-19, again with YHWH's sovereign power as the central theme. To begin with, the expanded messenger formula explains: 'Not a chaos he created it'. We have suggested that in all the other five occurrences of 'chaos' (Isa 40:17, 23; 41:29; 44:9; and 49:4), the connotation of powerlessness can be

distinctly identified from its context, and that judging from Isa 40:22; 44:13; and 47:14, we should render more accurately the word <sup>ל</sup>שָׁבַת as 'to sit (enthroned)'. As a result, the proclamation of YHWH as creator is elaborated with an affirmation highlighting his sovereignty rather than the novelty of his creation. We may even want to attempt a paraphrase: 'Not a weakling he created it / but for dominion he shaped it' (v.18a $\beta$ ). As we have indicated, this motif is supported by the conclusion of v.19b, where YHWH is portrayed as a supreme ruler bringing law and order after his victory and success. Finally, the appearing together of the three creation vocables (<sup>ב</sup>רָא, <sup>י</sup>צַר, and <sup>ע</sup>שָׂה) at the start of v.18 reminds us of two other similar occasions where the motif of YHWH's power is equally dominant, and to them we shall now direct our attention.

Isa 45:6b-8 brings the pericope of YHWH's commissioning Cyrus to its climax. As we have suggested, the main thrust of the announcement lies unequivocally in the very last clause of v.7. That YHWH, 'creates', 'shapes', and 'makes' all point to the conclusion that he is the one God 'making all these'. Since there is no other deity beside him, YHWH is in control of both darkness and woe on the one hand, and victory and salvation on the other. Lindström is probably correct to insist

'that the action ascribed to YHWH in Isa 45,7 refers solely to the imminent liberation of Israel from her Babylonian captivity. The positive phrases "who forms light" and "who makes weal" have to do with YHWH's saving intervention on behalf of his people, while the negative phrases "who creates darkness" and "who creates woe" refer to YHWH's destruction of the Babylonian empire.' (1983:198; author's emphases)

The metaphysical issue of the origin of evil does not come into consideration if the verb **כָּרַא** carries the meaning of control and not that of *creatio ex nihilo* (Deroche 1992:11-21).<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the conclusion of the salvation oracle in Isa 43:1-7 emphatically declares that YHWH has 'created', 'shaped', and 'made' Israel, echoing the opening address where YHWH is for the first time described as the creator of his people. We have argued

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<sup>3</sup> Thus Weinfeld's proposal (1968:121-124) that a subtle repudiation is being launched here against the relatively primitive and outdated mythological concept of the existence of primordial darkness preserved in Gen 1:2 cannot be sustained, for neither is the prophet himself antipathetic to the positive use of old myths (cf. Isa 51:9), nor does his 'monotheistic' faith require the philosophical denial of the existence of all other deities (cf. Isa 41:23).

that YHWH's concluding declaration may well imply that he alone is responsible for everything good or bad happening to his people, echoing the rhetorical question raised in the preceding pericope: 'Who has given Jacob for plundering, and Israel for robbers? Was it not YHWH?' (Isa 42:24a). Moreover, the phrase 'and for my glory' (Isa 43:7a, cf. 42:8 and 48:11) also refers clearly to the polemics against the idols, which must be 'made' and 'shaped' by human hands in contrast to YHWH, who 'makes' and 'shapes' Israel. The depiction of YHWH as Israel's creator therefore points once again to his unique supremacy and sovereign control over Israel.

Another reference to YHWH as the creator of Israel appears in Isa 43:15. We must be very cautious here because of the corrupt state of v.14, but the two other instances where YHWH is described as king (Isa 41:21 and 44:6) both suggest the nuance of absolute power and sovereignty, and this idea fits well with the motif of YHWH acting on behalf of Israel against Babylon. The same context of YHWH's sovereign power may be located in Isa 45:12, where YHWH proclaims himself to be the creator of both the cosmos and humanity. Hermisson (1987:16) flirts with the idea that the pericope may be constructed originally as YHWH's solemn proclamation before the heavenly council, but we should pay more attention to the parallel use of the three

verbs of creation (עָשָׂה, בָּרָא, and נָטָה) with the fourth, צִוָּה (to command), which distinctively carries the nuance of supreme authority. To be fair, we must concede the possibility of a special relationship being expressed here between the creator and his creatures, but such an opinion would shipwreck when confronted by the most salient use of בָּרָא in Isa 54:16, which Stuhlmueeller (1970:211) considers to be 'out of step with the others, in that its scope is very limited to God's control of enemy forces'. Nonetheless, the tables ought to be turned as we see it, for the verse is no less than the kingpin for a correct perception of the basic meaning of בָּרָא and the wide-ranging spectrum of YHWH's incomparable sovereignty.

There remain two examples which may lend some support to the long accepted view that בָּרָא is often connected with the notion of newness. Isa 41:20 concludes what Westermann calls a proclamation of salvation describing the transformation of nature, which is a well recognized motif for representing the powerful impact of YHWH's theophany (cf. Pss 104:27-30 and 107:33-35). At the same time, the point of confession that YHWH has created these changes is also focused squarely upon YHWH's supremacy. The emphasis on any sense of novelty must not be assumed, unless we insist on reading it *a priori* in every use of the verb בָּרָא.

Having said that, we must now examine Isa 48:6-7, where YHWH announces that the 'new things' (חֲדָשִׁים) have been created now. It looks like the unique case among all the sixteen occurrences of בָּרָא within Isaiah 40-55 where one may justifiably argue for the primary notion of newness in the verb 'to create'. However, we must pay careful attention as well to the fact that here נִבְרְאוּ (they have been created) is used in parallel to הִשְׁמַעְתִּיךָ (I have announced to you), which is applied not only to 'new things' but to 'former things' in v.3a as well. Since YHWH's declaration of both 'former things' and 'new things' represents not so much his ability to predict but his absolute control over all historical events, it is not without ground that we understand the use of בָּרָא here as a reiteration of YHWH's sovereignty in his decision of the timing of the announcement.

As an initial conclusion, our examination of all the sixteen cases of the use of בָּרָא in Isaiah 40-55 has indicated that among a wide range of its direct objects, the verb consistently conveys the basic nuance of YHWH's supreme power and sovereign control over all of his creation.

### 6.3 The Prophetic Literature

In addition to the sixteen occurrences in

Isaiah 40-55, the verb בָּרָא appears another five times mostly in the latter part of the book of Isaiah, and three of them are found in Isa 65:17-18. Here YHWH declares his creating 'new heavens and a new earth', which are set in sharp contrast with 'the former things'. Westermann (1969: 408) is correct to note that הָרָאשֹׁנֹת (the former things) in v.17b is identical in meaning with הַצָּרוֹת הָרָאשֹׁנֹת (the former troubles) in v.16b; hence the contrast lies between the past oppressions and sufferings and the future peace and tranquillity, which is precisely what the picture of the new Jerusalem in vv.19-25 endeavours to convey. The deliberate repetition of 'for look at me creating' in v.17a and v.18b confirms the parallelism between YHWH's creation of the new heavens and the new earth on the one hand and his creation of Jerusalem on the other. In the latter case, the focus of attention progresses from the sense of newness to that of joy and delight. The picture of a genteel lifestyle is nothing innovative or unprecedented, granted that we accept some of its exaggerations as poetic hyperbole, but YHWH's power and sovereign control must remain the sole reason for this dramatic deliverance and drastic change from dereliction to prosperity. Such a significant fact is indeed forcefully expressed through the careful choice of the verb בָּרָא.



A similar understanding of the use of כָּרָא is also found in Isa 57:18-19, where YHWH is said to be creating fruit of lips for Israel's mourners.<sup>4</sup> Although the Masoretic reading of these two verses is unsatisfactory, we may still attempt to offer our observation. It seems that v.19ba constitutes the content of YHWH's saying and not that of the 'fruit of lips', because its syntax is closely mirrored in v.21.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the 'fruit of lips' may be taken as a response to YHWH's saving acts described in v.18. The turning from lament to praise again rests upon the sovereign power of YHWH bringing into effect divine deliverance, expressed here in an abridged manner once more by the verb כָּרָא.

A final text from the book of Isaiah is Isa 4:5-6, which announces that YHWH will create over the assembly of Zion a cloud by day and smoke and fire by night. G's καὶ ἔξει at the beginning of v.5 seems to suggest a reading of וְכָא (and he will come) instead of

<sup>4</sup> As v.18b seems to be overloaded, we agree with most commentators to move וְלֹא־בְלִי to v.19a against M. We have also chosen to follow the Qere נִיר, which has the support of Q<sup>a</sup>, and not the Ketiv נִיר, which is a *hapax*.

<sup>5</sup> Pace Rashi and Redak (Rosenberg, 1983:454), both of whom consider the שְׁלוֹם to be the new speech created by YHWH in human mouths.

וַיִּבְרָא. However, מ is to be followed, for it is the more difficult reading and is supported by א<sup>a</sup> and other ancient versions. Furthermore, as Wildberger (1991:163) aptly puts it, 'the present passage apparently does not intend to speak of an appearance by Yahweh, but about the protection which Yahweh will bestow upon Zion after the judgment'.<sup>6</sup> Once again, YHWH's absolute power provides the basis for his secure protection over Zion, and it is in the context of divine sovereignty rather than creative novelty that the verb בָּרָא is employed.

Outside the book of Isaiah, the one example which most clearly represents the use of בָּרָא again in the context of YHWH's sovereignty and power comes from Amos 4:13. That it is a judgement-doxology couched in theophanic language and mythical imagery has been well recognized (Wolff 1977:215). The absolute power of YHWH is portrayed through successive sketches of him 'shaping mountain', 'creating wind', 'making the morning darkness',<sup>7</sup> and what Andersen and Freedman describe as

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<sup>6</sup> Wildberger (1991:171) also cites the opinion of Hertzberg, 'who considers the Septuagint text to be more original'. Clements also prefers א to מ, emphasizing the idea of 'Yahweh's accompanying presence' (1980:54-55).

<sup>7</sup> Paul observes that the use of the three verbs for creation in a triad 'represent[s] the comprehensive creative power of the Lord' (1991:153-154).

'an echo of YHWH's trampling the primordial dragon, whose humps are the ridges' (1989:455). The reference to YHWH's acts of creation does not indicate any new beginning or special relationship for the people of Israel, who have been warned that they should prepare to meet their God (v.12), but rather points unmistakably to the creator as the supreme judge.

A similar context of judgement is apparently reflected in Ezek 21:35[30], where the sword of judgement has come under judgement itself. Miguens (1974:43-44) thinks that the verb **נִבְרָאָה** (you are created) indicates 'an activity which brings about something new', but the polemical context of power and control must not be overlooked, and we agree with Zimmerli (1979:449) that it is 'the createdness of those addressed' which is being emphasized here. The same conclusion may be drawn in relation to the two mentionings of 'the day you have been created' in the taunt song against the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:13 and 15). In view of the predominant motif of pride running through the divine speech, the repeated remark looks more pregnant than an innocent temporal reference.

Our last two cases from the prophetic literature are more ambiguous concerning the meaning of **נִבְרָא**. Mal 2:10 presents a situation where we must decide

what exactly is the premise of the discussion when the prophet asks rhetorically, 'Has not one El created us?' Bearing in mind similar arguments in Prov 14:31; 17:5; and 22:2, we may insist that here both ideas of origin and superior authority are present in the reference to YHWH as father and creator, whereas any notion of newness is definitely at odds with the context of the prophetic disputation.

Finally, Jer 31:22 announces that 'YHWH has created a new thing (חֲדָשָׁה) on earth'. The crux of the matter is of course the accurate translation of תְּסֹבֵב, and hence the precise meaning of the phrase 'a female "encompassing" a male'. Granted that we plead ignorance over this baffling text,<sup>8</sup> there remains some room for exploration of the use of בָּרָא here. If the 'new thing' created by YHWH is meant to overcome the wavering of faithless Israel in their decision to return, we may want to ask if it is simply the novelty of YHWH's creation that will provide the absent conviction. Is it not more important for the people to witness the power and sovereignty of YHWH coming to their aid before

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<sup>8</sup> 'The wiser course for the exegete is to admit ignorance and acknowledge that ancient texts occasionally do baffle the modern hermeneut. [Jer]31.22b is one such baffling text' (Carroll 1986:604).

responding to the prophetic exhortation, hence the careful choice of בָּרָא in this present context?<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, we must concede the fact that because of its obscurity, this present text offers dangerous ground to base any of our conclusions.

Our examination of the additional eleven appearances of בָּרָא within the prophetic literature has enabled us to draw the interim conclusion that, despite the two cases of Isa 65:17 and Jer 31:22, where the verb is explicitly linked to the notion of הַחֲדָשָׁה, the meaning of בָּרָא remains inextricably tied to the sovereign power of YHWH. It is now necessary for us to test our thesis further with the fourteen texts of the Pentateuch, particularly in the beginning chapters of the book of Genesis.

#### 6.4 The Pentateuch

Eleven of the fourteen occurrences of בָּרָא in the Pentateuch are found at the beginning of the book of Genesis, and out of these eleven occurrences, six appear

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<sup>9</sup> Pace Holladay (1989:195), who hastily links this unique occurrence of בָּרָא in the book of Jeremiah to the theme of newness as well as the first creation act in Gen 1.

right within the very first section of Gen 1:1-2:3.<sup>10</sup>

On closer examination, we further observe the fact that apart from its use in the opening and closing sentences (Gen 1:1 and 2:3b), בָּרָא appears only in vv.21 and 27. It is therefore not justifiable for Westermann (1974:120) to remark that '[t]he verbs "make" and "create" predominate'. On the contrary, בָּרָא appears to be utilized very sparingly in the narrative of the course of creation. Westermann is also of the opinion that there is hardly any distinction in meaning between בָּרָא and עָשָׂה in this text, for both verbs are sometimes used to describe the same act of creation (e.g. Gen 1:26-27). When בָּרָא is used instead of עָשָׂה, it is no more than a preference of the Priestly redactor, who has nevertheless chosen not to replace עָשָׂה in the source materials with בָּרָא on each and every occasion. However, the way בָּרָא has been employed looks far from being arbitrarily synonymous with עָשָׂה. Even Westermann (1974:190) himself admits later that בָּרָא 'may have been chosen deliberately at the beginning of the creation of living beings' in Gen 1:21. It is particularly

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<sup>10</sup> The אֱלֹהִים תּוֹלְדוֹת formula of Gen 2:4a denotes the beginning of a new section (Wenham 1987:55, Sarna 1989:16-17, and Hamilton 1990:151-152).

interesting here to find the notorious 'giant serpents',<sup>11</sup> topping the list of the living creatures. While it is possible to argue that the use of **נָחָא** here may signify a new stage of the emergence of animate beings, we tend to agree more with Wenham's suggestion (1987:24) that 'it may well be that this verse mentions that the great sea monsters were created by God precisely to insist on his sovereignty over them'.<sup>12</sup> There is a subtle but familiar nuance of power struggle when **נָחָא** is applied to God's archenemy; it certainly reminds us of the similar use of the verb in Isa 54:16.

The triple application of **נָחָא** to God's creation of humanity in Gen 1:27 may now be approached from this perspective of divine sovereignty as well. Humanity has been singled out from the entire creation by God's command to 'subdue' and 'rule' the earth and

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<sup>11</sup> **תַּחְיִימוֹת הַנְּדָלִים** undoubtedly allude to the mythical forces of evil in opposition to YHWH. Cf. Pss 74:13; 148:7; Isa 27:1; 51:9; and Job 7:12. The noun is also used to refer to snakes in Exod 7:9-12; hence our choice of 'serpents' instead of 'dragons' or 'monsters'.

<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, von Rad's comment that **נָחָא** 'points without doubt to a direct relationship between creature and creator' (1961:54) can only be maintained by blatantly ignoring the mythical overtone of these 'giant serpents'.

its creatures (vv.26 and 28). Whereas the royal implication and imperialistic flavour are recognizable, they are also readily open to hubristic misinterpretations. Thus there is a need for reminding each and every member of the human race that they are nonetheless being held accountable to the supreme authority of their creator. The threefold repetition of **בָּרָא** serves to drive home the truth of responsible stewardship, which is also expressed in the concept of *Imago Dei* (Gibson 1981:71-74).

The use of **בָּרָא** at Gen 1:1 and 2:3 refers also to God's sovereign control over his entire creation. This significant motif of God's absolute power elucidates the intriguing portrayal at the beginning about the divine **רָחַץ** 'swooping down'<sup>13</sup> upon the surface of the primeval deep, underlies the divine fiat ('and God said') as the prevalent formulation of God's mode of creativity,<sup>14</sup> and anticipates the confidently triumphal

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<sup>13</sup> The *Piel* form of **רָחַץ** appears only in Gen 1:2 and Deut 32:11, where it describes how eagles teach their young to fly by 'swooping down' at them in order to get them jump out from the nest (Peters, 1914:81-86). The imagery is therefore one of violent attack rather than of gentle incubation. Cf. Ps 93:3-4.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ps 33:6 and 9. The implications of supreme authority behind the apparently simple act of speaking



rest of God on the seventh day.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Wenham (1987:126) is right to observe that both summary sentences of Gen 2:4 and 5:1-2 are heavily dependent on Gen 1:1-2:3, and so the nuances of בָּרָא are being carried over into these verses. The same is also true with Gen 6:7, where the use of בָּרָא may have hinted at the sovereignty of YHWH as the supreme judge of all humankind. In fact, that the Deluge comes under the very command of YHWH and not from the hostile forces of evil reiterates the absolute power of YHWH.

Outside the first chapters of Genesis, בָּרָא appears in Exod 34:10, although none of the more recent English translations has chosen to render it with 'created'.<sup>16</sup> Now one of these 'wonders' which has not been 'created' but will be 'made' by YHWH is the driving out of Israel's enemies who are inhabitants of the

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are also illustrated amply in an incident recorded in Matt 8:5-10 (= Luke 7:2-10).

<sup>15</sup> As Levenson (1988:111) wittily puts it, 'the order that he brings into existence through creation is so secure and self-sustaining that it can survive a day without his maintenance'.

<sup>16</sup> NIV has 'done', NJB has 'worked', NJPS has 'wrought', and both REB and NRSV have 'performed'. Only REB reflects in its translation the distinction between בָּרָא and עָשָׂה.

promised land (v.11), and such a 'making of YHWH' will induce fear among the people who see it. In our opinion, the use of **בָּרָא** in this context refers ultimately to YHWH's sovereignty. Displacement of tribes is nothing new or miraculous in the history of the Ancient Near East, and reverence is only caused by the manifestation of YHWH's absolute power. The verb **בָּרָא** has its own unique nuances and should not be toned down to become synonymous with **עָשָׂה**.

A similar conclusion may be drawn in relation to Num 16:30, although we must first consider the possibility of repointing **מ**. The verbal noun **בְּרִיאָה** is a *hapax*, and quoting Ibn Ezra, Milgrom (1990:137) suggests repointing the verb from **בָּרָא** (*Qal*) to **יָבֵרָא** (*Piel*), hence the translation: 'if YHWH cuts open a chasm', which is corroborated by the use of **בָּקַע** (to burst open) in the fulfilment passage of v.31.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, **Θ**'s *ἐν φασματι δεῖξει* (if he shows in a portent) reflects a reading of **בְּרִאִי יִרְאֶה**, and thus suggests a possible confusion about the original text (Budd 1984:181), though admittedly it falls short of

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Hanson, who suggests that here 'a satisfactory translation is possible if **בָּרָא** is understood in its primary sense, "to fashion, to form by cutting"' (1972:359).

lending a clear support to the proposed repointing. However, if **III** is to be followed, we must then decide what is the purpose of the use of **כִּרְאָה** in the present context. Rashi (Isaiah & Sharfman 1950:174) does not hesitate to equate **כִּרְאָה** with **תִּדְשֵׁה** (a new thing), but granted that the bursting open of the ground is something unprecedented, there is also a strong sense of YHWH's power which causes such a terrifying incident to happen. After all, it must be precisely this clear manifestation of YHWH's absolute power, and not just his ability to perform a new miracle, that will show beyond any doubt that 'these men have despised YHWH'.

The final example from Deut 4:32 appears to be a relatively neutral one. The mentioning of God creating humanity seems *prima facie* no more than a temporal reference to the beginning of history, nevertheless, von Rad (1966:51) is certainly right in pointing out that it is only 'the miraculous' and 'the spectacular nature of the individual events' that have come into consideration. If then the creation of humanity is seen among the great events (such as God's voice being heard out of a fire) where the supreme power of YHWH has clearly been revealed, are we therefore supposed to be reminded of the unique sovereignty of God in his great act of creating humanity as well?

Our further examination of all the fourteen occurrences of **כָּרַךְ** within the Pentateuch has provided more evidence for our thesis that the verb should be understood to mean the absolute power and sovereign control of YHWH. This is especially the case in Gen 1:1-2:3. In the few instances where the sense of newness may be legitimately present, there is always a equally strong, if not even stronger, motif of YHWH's power and authority underlying the passages. It remains for us now to extend our survey into the last major area of the Hebrew Bible, namely, the Writings.

## 6.5 The Writings

Among the six occurrences of **כָּרַךְ** in the Psalter, Ps 148:5 offers us a straightforward enough case for the verb to be interpreted in terms not of newness but of power. This verse and the one following bring to a climax the first half of the psalm, in which the heavenly powers named in vv.2-4 are exhorted to praise YHWH, who commands their creation and determines their activities. A similar allusion to YHWH's sovereignty may also be located in Ps 89:13[12], where the motif of YHWH's power and might surrounding the verse (vv.6-15[5-14]) helps to make its meaning obvious. Dahood's suggestion (1968:314) that we are actually looking at the names of four sacred mountains ('Zaphon

and Yamin', the latter is equivalent to **צָפוֹן** in Cant 4:8, instead of 'north and south') is very tempting, but whether the references are mythical or geographical, the nuance of divine sovereignty is unmistakable. **בָּרָא** then reappears later on in v.48[47]. While the text here shows variations in one or two Mss, the meaning of **רָם** remains sufficiently clear, and **ἔ** seems also to be a reasonable paraphrase: *μνησθητι τις μου ἡ ὑπόστασις· μη γὰρ ματαιῶς ἐκτίσας πάντας τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων* (Remember what my nature is; for is it in vain that you have created all the sons of men?) The reference to YHWH's creation of humanity is made in relation to the helplessness of one who is confronted by the conquering power of death, and thus the psalmist prays to YHWH for deliverance with a specific appeal to his absolute sovereignty as creator.

There are two cases where **בָּרָא** is used parallel to the verb **חַיֵּה** (to renew). In Ps 104:30 the notion of newness is indeed present in YHWH dispatching his Spirit, but the verb **יַחַיֵּה** seems to incline towards the sense of restoration more than that of unprecedented novelty. Moreover, the emphasis on YHWH's absolute control over life and death is certainly in tune with the dominant concern for YHWH's power throughout the entire psalm, while the presence of YHWH's Spirit and the mentioning of his creating authority are only two

more telltale signs of this underlying theme. On the other hand, a more subtle case may be found in Ps 51:12[10], where the psalmist asks God to create a clean heart for him. According to v.9[7], the purity (טָהוֹר) of one's heart is the result of expiation (תְּחַטֵּאֲנִי) and cleansing (תְּכַבְּשֵׁנִי). But the profound realization of his sinful nature has prompted the psalmist to concede his own inability to change himself, hence his appeal to the divine power to help him. Here we do not agree with Kirkpatrick, who thinks that because בָּרָא is used in the first stich of the verse,

'in the parallel line renew should be rather make new (Vulg. *innova* better than Jer. *renova*). It is not the restoration of what was there before that he desires, but a radical change of heart and spirit' (1902:292; author's emphases).

It seems to us that Kirkpatrick is wrong in deducing the nuance of תְּחַיֶּה from the faulty assumption that בָּרָא must always mean 'bringing into being what did not exist before' (*ibid.*). In fact, the sense of restoration is reiterated by תְּשִׁיבָה in v.14[12].<sup>18</sup> There is of course an

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<sup>18</sup> The fact that vv.12-14[10-12] all begin their second stich with רוּחַ seems to suggest the identity of this 'spirit' throughout as YHWH's spirit, who, unlike the human spirit, may only be restored but not 'made new' within a person. The parallel in v.12[10] between לֵב and רוּחַ does not necessarily confine the reference to

inevitable sense of newness in the language of penitence, but again the underlying theme remains clearly focused on YHWH's sovereign power.

Finally, the last example of נָבְרָא in the Psalter is found in Ps 102:19[18], which is part of an appeal to praise YHWH. The context of this appeal (vv.13-23[12-22]) refers clearly to YHWH's power to save and consequently his sovereignty being recognized among the nations. Kraus (1989:286) is right in pointing out that 'עַם נִבְרָא' applies to the "new creation" of the people of God after the exile', though it would be even more to the point to say that the people have been 'created' through the saving power of YHWH. Consequently, these people praising YHWH are not just any generation to be born in the future,<sup>19</sup> they are none other than those who have themselves experienced his

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the psalmist's spirit, if we understand that 'biblical lines are parallelistic not because B is meant to be a parallel of A, but because B typically supports A, carries it further, backs it up, completes it, goes beyond it' (Kugel 1981:52; author's emphasis). Cf. Alter (1985:3-26).

<sup>19</sup> NJB, REB, and NRSV all translate נִבְרָא as 'born', presumably taking the cue from the parallelism between לְדוֹר אַחֲרָיוֹן and יָעַם נִבְרָא. On the contrary, NIV and NJPS have both decided to keep the verb 'created'.

powerful deliverance. If Allen is right in observing here the '[t]he soteriological usage [of בָּרָא] evidently reflects that of Second Isaiah' (1983:10), then there is certainly no escape from the fact once again that the verb בָּרָא in this psalm carries the distinctive connotation of YHWH's power and sovereignty.

Our very last example of בָּרָא in the entire Hebrew Bible comes from Eccl 12:1. Fox (1989:299) is keen to defend the integrity of the verse, showing that there is no textual ground for emendations of בּוֹרְאֵיךָ ('your creator'). The argument that a reference to the creator is inconsistent with the encouragement to enjoy life prior to old age and death cannot be sustained either, for the preceding two paragraphs (11:7-8 and 9-10)<sup>20</sup> both juxtapose a 'hedonistic' advice with an unpleasant reminder (Murphy 1992:117). Furthermore, the fact that בָּרָא appears only here in all the wisdom writings of the Hebrew canon is not an adequate reason for us to reject our text as a proper reference to the creator. In fact, the motif of divine judgment appears in Eccl 3:16-17; 8:5-6; 11:9; and 12:14, and within this context, to remember one's creator is to think of the

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<sup>20</sup> The three consecutive paragraphs of Eccl 11:7-8, 9-10, and 12:1-8 all end with the keyword הֶבֱל (futility) and share the same theme of life enjoyment.



supreme judge of one's life and work.<sup>21</sup> Once again there is strong evidence for us to understand the verb **כָּרָא** as carrying precisely the nuance of divine sovereignty and power.

## 6.6 Summary

Our survey of the forty-eight occurrences of **כָּרָא** in the Hebrew Bible shows that YHWH as the supreme creator does not only manifest his mastery over the physical universe, his absolute authority is equally efficacious over friends or foes. Moreover, when YHWH is portrayed as Israel's creator, it indicates not so much a special relationship but YHWH's sovereign control over everything happening to his people. Furthermore, the five examples where **כָּרָא** is explicitly linked with the root **שָׂדַד** do not necessarily imply a semantic identification between the two, for in every one of them the motif of YHWH's power is present as well. As a result, we may now draw our final conclusion that a consistent understanding of the verb **כָּרָא** does point definitively to the connotations of YHWH's sovereign power and control.

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<sup>21</sup> Pace Fox, who agrees with Gilbert 'that in this context to think on [*sic*; of?] one's creator is to think of death' (1989:300).

## CHAPTER 7

### PROMISES OF SALVATION

#### 7.1 Introduction

In Isaiah 40-55, there are other salvation speeches beyond the five oracles of salvation already discussed. Westermann proposes to classify them under the genre of the proclamation of salvation (*Heilsankündigung*), which, according to Isa 41:17-20, exhibits the following structure (1964b:120):

- (1) A quotation from the community lament;
- (2) Proclamation of salvation:
  - (i) God's turning;
  - (ii) God's intervention; and
- (3) Goal.

The new genre is to be distinguished from the salvation oracles by the following six characteristics (Harner 1969:432): a) both the direct form of address and the formula, 'Do not fear', are absent; b) it quotes at the beginning from the lament of the community instead of

just alluding to the lament of the individual; c) the emphasis is put on the future rather than the present aspect of salvation; d) it speaks more concretely of what is going to happen; e) it does not reflect directly any liturgical form; and f) it is supposed to be delivered by a prophet rather than a priest. In addition to Isa 41:17-20; 42:14-17; 43:16-21; 45:14-17; and 49:7-12, all of which display the basic structure of the new genre, Westermann observes that proclamations of salvation also can be found in larger units such as Isa 49:14-26 and 51:9-52:3 (1987:36-37). Furthermore, he suggests that the proclamation of salvation often constitutes an important component of yet other texts like Isa 46:1-13; 48:1-11, 12-16; 54 & 55 (1964b:122).

Westermann's thesis has been followed closely by Schoors, who adds Isa 46:12-13; 49:14-26; 51:1+3-6, 7-8; 54:7-10, 11-17; and 55:1-5 to the list (1973:84-85). While many subsequent commentators are happy to employ this genre-label to name the various salvation speeches in Isaiah 40-55, there are others who remain unconvinced. Having re-examined all the texts mentioned by Westermann, Schüpphaus (1971:179-181) argues that these messages are declared with two purposes in mind. Firstly, they are comforting promises intended to lift the audience from fear and despondency. Secondly, they are arguments designed to refute

scepticism and doubt among the audience regarding the power of YHWH. In either case they should not be mistaken as predictions of some future event; hence they can hardly be characterized appropriately as proclamations of salvation. Similarly, Elliger (1978:159-160, 257-258, 344-345) consistently prefers to name these pericopae (Isa 41:17-20; 42:14-17; and 43:16-21) 'promises' after Gunkel's definition. At the same time, Melugin (1976:22-27) strongly disagrees that one must disregard the variety in structures among these salvation speeches in order to insist on just one basic genre called the proclamation of salvation. As a result, we do not see any scholarly consensus in relation to the establishment of this new genre. In this chapter, as we examine the last group of five passages which Westermann classifies together under the genre of the so-called 'proclamations of salvation', we shall likewise pay attention to the formal structure as well as the thematic development of these pericopae.

## 7.2 Isaiah 41:17-20

מִבְּקָשִׁים מִים וְאֵין	<sup>17</sup> הֶעֱנִיִּים וְהִאֲבִינִים
לְשׁוֹנָם בְּצָמָא בְּשִׁתָּה	
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֶעֱזָבָם:	אֲנִי יְהוָה אֶעֱנֶם
וּבְחַיֵּךְ בְּקַעֲוֹת מַעֲיָנוֹת	<sup>18</sup> אֶפְתָּח עַל-שִׁפְיָם בְּהִרְוֹת
וְאֶרְץ צִדָּה לְמוֹצְאֵי מָרִם:	אֲשִׁים מִדְּבַר לְאַגְם-מִים

שָׁמָּה בְּהָדָס וְעֵץ שֶׁמֶן	אֶתֶּן בַּמִּדְבָּר אֲרֵז <sup>19</sup>
תִּדְדָר וּתְאֲשִׁיר בְּתִדְרִי:	אָשִׁים בְּעֶרְבָה בְּרוֹשׁ
וְרִשְׁמִי וְיִשְׁכְּלִי בְּתִדְרִי	לִמְעַן יֵרְאוּ וַיִּדְעוּ <sup>20</sup>
וּקְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרָאָה:	כִּי יִדְיָהוּהָ עָשְׂתָה זֹאת

<sup>17</sup> The poor and the needy -

Seeking water but there is none,

Their tongue has been parched in the thirst.

I am YHWH, I shall answer them,

I am the God of Israel, I shall not forsake them.

<sup>18</sup> I shall open upon barren heights rivers,

And among valleys springs;

I shall make wilderness into a pool of waters,<sup>1</sup>

And dry ground into sources of waters.

<sup>19</sup> I shall provide in the wilderness cedar,

Acacia and myrtle and oil-tree;<sup>2</sup>

I shall put in the desert cypress,

Elm and pine together.

<sup>1</sup> Based on G's εἰς ἐλῆ (into marshes), BHS suggests a Hebrew original of לְאַגְמִים for M's לְאַגְם-מִים, avoiding the reduplication with מִים in the second half-line at the same time. But such an emendation is rendered both unnecessary and undesirable by the almost *verbatim* parallel in Ps 107:35. Cf. North (1964:101).

<sup>2</sup> Redek (Rosenberg 1989:332-333) is of the opinion that since שֶׁמֶן עֵץ and זֵית are listed side by side in Neh 8:15, the former is unlikely to be the olive tree.

<sup>20</sup>So that they will see and know,

And will set and comprehend together;

That the hand of YHWH has made this,

And the Holy One of Israel has created it.

According to Westermann (1964b:120, 1966:67), this is the typical example of the genre he calls the proclamation of salvation. The pericope begins with a quotation from a community lament (v.17a), continues with the main substance of the proclamation, which embraces firstly God's turning towards Israel (v.17b) and secondly his divine intervention (vv.18-19), and finally concludes with a statement of goal (v.20). Melugin has challenged Westermann's identification of such an independent genre, but he offers no different analysis on the form of this specific passage (1976:22-23). On the other hand, Elliger (1978:159-160) agrees with Westermann that the divine speech of Isa 41:17-20 lacks the characteristics of the salvation oracle, but he prefers to classify it as the prophetic genre of promise after Gunkel, while questioning its functional connection with the community lament. Moreover, he suggests instead a three-fold structure of an introduction (v.17), a main part (vv.18-19), and a conclusion (v.20), all focusing on the theme of divine intervention. The fact that now v.17 is read as a unity appears to be a more satisfactory alternative, but the

decision can only be made when we have the opportunity of examining all the other pericopae as well.

A more pressing issue for us is to determine whether the proclamation refers specifically to the homecoming of the people in exile through the desert. On the one hand, we are being offered graphic conjectures like that of Schüpphaus, who imagines the divine speech to be a reassuring answer to the complaint that those who return may face a possible threat of miserable death on their way (1971:163-164). On the other hand, we encounter vehement objections from Barstad, who insists that such metaphors of thirst and water and of deserts changing into oases are general descriptions concerning the restoration of the people without any allusion whatsoever to a second Exodus from Babylon (1989:27-32). It seems to us that the burden of proof must lie with the former, for the mentioning of wilderness and thirst in the Hebrew Bible indeed does not necessarily imply always a desert journey. We have already noted the parallel between Isa 41:18b and Ps 107:35, where the transformation of nature is a familiar motif of YHWH's saving power. Hos 2:5b[3b] also mentions wilderness (מִדְבָּר), dry ground (אֶרֶץ צִיָּה), and thirst (בְּצִמָּה), and they are apparently images of YHWH's judgement on Israel in contrast to the prosperity she has been enjoying from the fertility of the land (vv.10-15[8-13]). Isa 51:3

even talks about the wilderness and desert of Zion turning into Eden, the renowned garden of God. All these passages do indeed caution us not to jump too quickly to the conclusion that the desert imagery in Isa 41:17-20 must be taken literally as referring to the journey homeward (*pace* Whybray 1975:66). In fact, as McKenzie (1968:32) aptly points out,

'The transformation of a defeated and scattered people into a nation is a wonder no less incredible than the transformation of the desert. It is the reversal of the process of judgment by which Yahweh turns cities and settled land into a desert.'

The extended metaphor of the transformation of the desert (vv.18-19) illustrates the dramatic change which is going to happen to the people of YHWH. The plight and predicament of Israel will end because YHWH announces that he will answer their plea (v.17b), which also indicates the saving nature of YHWH's response. Here although none of the salvation words has been used, the divine act remains unmistakably that of deliverance and help given by YHWH to bring about a reversal of the people's fortune. It is equally clear that such a saving deed is at the same time a manifestation of the sovereignty of YHWH.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, the pericope

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<sup>3</sup> Commentators are all quick to point out parallel



concludes with an explicit statement about YHWH's absolute power and control expressed through the verb בָּרָא. The motifs of creation and redemption once again join hands under the theme of YHWH's supreme lordship.

One final observation must yet be made. The proclamation of Israel's reversal of fortune in Isa 41:17-20 recalls the similar promise held out to the 'worm of Jacob' and presumably the 'dead ones of Israel' in the previous pericope (vv.8-16). Both promises focus on YHWH's powerful salvation, which will result in the restoration of Israel in terms of the strengthening of YHWH's people, but there is not any concrete discussion of their homeward journey. In fact, we are confronted by a probably deliberate ambiguity as far as the specific locality of the people in distress is concerned. The general nature of both promises suggests a close continuity between them, and since the oracle of salvation in 41:8-16 is further linked with the preceeding trial speech and its aftermath (41:1-4 + 5-7), the proclamation of vv.17-20 as a whole may be seen as the concluding part of an 'enlarged poem' which 'begins and ends with the portrayal of Yahweh's saving

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motifs in Pss 74, 104, and 107, where the theme of YHWH's sovereignty dominates. Cf. Schoors (1973:87) and Barstad (1989:27-32).

deeds in acts of creation' (Melugin 1976:97). It is indeed more than likely that the statement, 'That the hand of YHWH has made (עָשָׂה) this,' (Isa 41:20bα) is a distant but still recognizable response to the question posed towards the end of the trial speech, 'Who has worked and made (וְעָשָׂה)?' (Isa 41:4aα). Such an observation reiterates our view that the pericopae in Isaiah 40-55 should not be regarded as isolated and independent units put together only on the *Stichwort* principle.

### 7.3 Isaiah 42:10-17

וְתִחַלְתּוּ מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ	<sup>10</sup> שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר תְּדָשׁ
אֲיִים וְיֹשְׁבֵיהֶם:	יִזְרְחֵי תִים וּמִלֹּאִי
תִּצְרִים תֵּשֵׁב קֶדֶר	<sup>11</sup> וְשֹׂאֵי מִדְבָּר וְעָרֵי
מִרְאֵשׁ תְּרִים וְצֻחוּ:	דָּרְבוּ וְשָׁבִי סֶלַע
וְתִחַלְתּוּ בְּאֲיִים וּבְיָדָיו:	<sup>12</sup> וְשִׁמּוֹ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד
בְּאִישׁ מִלְחָמוֹת וְעִיר קִנְיָאָה	<sup>13</sup> וְיִהְיֶה כְּגִבּוֹר נֶצַח
עַל-אִיְכִיֹּר וְתִגְבֹּר:	דָּרִיעַ אֶת-נִצְרִיחַ
אֲחֲרִישׁ אֲחֲאֶפֶק	<sup>14</sup> וְתִחַשְׁתִּי מַעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁם וְאֲשֶׁאֶף יָחַד:	כִּי־לִדָּה אֶפְעֶה
וְכָל-עֹשֶׂכֶם אוֹכִישׁ	<sup>15</sup> אֲחֲרִיב תְּרִים וּגְבָעוֹת
וְאֶגְמִים אוֹכִישׁ:	וְשִׁמְתִי גְדֵרוֹת לְאֲיִים
בְּנִתִיבוֹת לֹא-יָדְעוּ אֲדָרִיכֶם	<sup>16</sup> וְיִהְיוּ לְכִתִּי עוֹרִים בְּדֶרֶךְ לֹא יָדְעוּ
וּמַעֲקֹשִׁים לְמִישׁוֹר	אֲשִׁים מִחֹשֶׁף לְפָנֵיהֶם לְאוֹר
עֲשִׂיתֶם וְלֹא עֲזַבְתֶּם:	אֵלֶּה תִּדְבָּרִים

הַבְּטָחִים בַּפֶּסֶל  
אֲתָם אֶל־הֵינּוּ:

נָסְגוּ אֲחֹזֵר יִבְשׁוּ בַשָּׁת<sup>17</sup>  
הָאֲמָרִים לְמַסְכָּה

<sup>10</sup> Sing to YHWH a new song!

His praise from the end of the earth.

Those who sail<sup>4</sup> the sea and what fills it,

Coastlands and their dwellers.

<sup>11</sup> Let desert and its towns cry out,

Villages where Kedar dwells;

Let the dwellers of Sela ring out,

From top of mountains let them shout.

<sup>12</sup> Let them give to YHWH honour,

And his praise in the coastlands let them declare.

<sup>13</sup> YHWH like the warrior will go out,

Like a man of battles he will stir up zeal;

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<sup>4</sup> Literally, 'go down'; the phrase יִרְדִּי הַיָּם means the seafarers, cf. Ps 107:23. Many commentators find the juxtaposition of יִרְדִּי הַיָּם and וּמִלֵּאֵי harsh and unacceptable, so they suggest various emendations like following Pss 96:11 and 98:7 to read יִרְעֵם הַיָּם (Let the sea roar). But as Levy correctly argues, 'it is almost incredible that a copyist could go wrong over a word so familiar in this context and in the Psalms' (1925:149). Moreover, מ enjoys solid support from the ancient versions and Q<sup>a</sup>, and it is not without meaning if we 'allow for a certain hastiness of thought and confusion in description which are not unknown elsewhere in the work of this prophet' (Levy *ibid.*).

He will yell, indeed he will roar,

Upon his enemies he will vaunt himself.

<sup>14</sup> I have been quiet from of old,

Shall I keep silent? Shall I restrain myself?<sup>5</sup>

Like the woman in labour I shall exhale,

I shall pant and I shall gasp together.

<sup>15</sup> I shall desiccate mountains and hills,

And all their vegetation I shall dry up;

And I shall make rivers into coastlands,

And pools I shall dry up. [not known,

<sup>16</sup> And I shall make blind people go on a way they have

On paths they have not known I shall make them

I shall turn darkness before them into light, [walk;

And crooked places into a level ground.

These are the words -

I made them and I have not abandoned them.

<sup>17</sup> They have been turned back, they will be utterly

Those trusting in the image; [ashamed,

Those saying to an idol:

You are our gods.

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<sup>5</sup> Rashi notes the sudden change of tense in v.14a $\beta$  (Rosenberg 1989:341). Taking the hint from  $\textcircled{S}$ , we agree with Fohrer (1964:53) and Elliger (1978:261) that these two verbs are best understood as rhetorical questions, thus maintaining the distinction between the two stichs of v.14a.

Westermann is of the opinion that a comparison with the first proclamation of salvation, i.e., Isa 41:17-20, may assist our understanding of the pericope (1966:88):

v.14a	=	41:17a	Reference to the lament
v.14b	=	41:17b	Change in God's attitude
vv.15-16	=	41:18-19	God's intervention
v.17	=	41:20	Consequence

While Schoors (1973:92) and Melugin (1976:103) both agree with Westermann's analysis, they also notice at the same time the uniqueness of the final verse, which is not formally a statement of the final goal of YHWH's intervention. On the other hand, Elliger (1978:257-258) not only disputes the appropriateness of classifying Isa 41:20 with Isa 42:17 as being form-critically identical, he further challenges if v.14a should be understood at all as a reference to a community lament, pointing to the fact that v.14a $\beta$  is better translated as YHWH's rhetorical question and dismissing the parallel use of the two verbs,  $\text{נָחַם}$  (to be quiet) and  $\text{כָּבַח}$  (to restrain oneself), in Isa 64:11 as probably dependent on Deutero-Isaiah; hence the latter text is an insufficient proof for the original *Sitz im Leben* of the community lament. Once again, Elliger prefers Gunkel's older label of prophetic promise to Westermann's newly discovered genre of proclamation of salvation.

On the contrary, North proposes that we should compare our passage to the common pattern of the community thanksgiving psalms (such as Pss 96, 98, and 149), and consider Isa 42:10-17 as a single unit, 'notwithstanding its changes of metre and subject in vv.14-17' (1964:114; cf. Dion 1991). The pericope is then seen to be made up of the summons to praise (vv.10-12), the descriptive acclamations of YHWH as the victorious warrior (vv.13-15), and the announcement of his sovereign lordship over both his own people and the idol-worshippers (vv.16-17). In this way, the formal elements of the proclamation of salvation have been assimilated into a larger literary context of a thanksgiving hymn.<sup>6</sup> However, despite the hint from Q<sup>a</sup>, which apparently regards vv.10-17 as one unit, Elliger insists that vv.10-13 and vv.14-17 must be separated (1978:243-244). His objections may be summarized into the following three major points: a) there is no example of the transition of a hymn into a long divine speech; b) the image of the warrior in v.13 does not seem to

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<sup>6</sup> Westermann (1964b:120) acknowledges that in a number of texts, the proclamation of salvation may be joined with other forms of speech to bring about larger units. But Isa 42:14-17 is not recognized by him to be one of these larger units of texts. In his commentary, Westermann still insists that Isa 42:14-17 'is obviously an independent unit' (1966:87).

have anything in common with the image of the woman giving birth in v.14 as well as the clearing up of obstacles for the homeward journey in vv.15-16, and so v.13 would make a very strange introduction to the divine speech; and c) the apparent disproportion between the substantial introduction (vv.10-12) and the brief main part (v.13) of the hymn is not unusual among other examples within the Psalter, therefore it becomes unnecessary to have the hymn extended to include vv.14-17. Now the final point is significant only if we are left with no other choice but to justify the shape of the hymnic pericope of vv.10-13. There may be many hymns which begin with an expanded summons and continue with an abrupt content, but the question remains whether Isa 42:10-13 should be counted as one of them. Moreover, Elliger's first point looks like an argument from silence which carries little weight, especially when we are here dealing with poetic creativity and not rigid adherence. The only serious contention remains that of the alleged incongruity between v.13 and vv.14-16 in the matter of the images employed. It is to these striking images that we shall now direct our full attention.

The crux of the matter lies in what Darr calls 'the meaning of the gynomorphic imagery in v.14 and its relationship to the preceding image of Yahweh as a warrior' (1987:562). Does **כַּיֹּלְדָּה** (like the woman in

labour) refer to the agony and pain of child birth,<sup>7</sup> or does it point to the idea of giving birth and hence the birth of something new?<sup>8</sup> Darr quite correctly begins by

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<sup>7</sup> This appears to be the conventional sense of the imagery employed in other parts of the Hebrew Bible (cf. Isa 13:7-8; 21:3; Ps 48:7[6]; Jer 6:24; 49:24), but in all these cases it is never applied to YHWH. I apparently reads Isa 42:14b according to the same traditional norm:

כחבלין על ילדא יתגלי דיני עליהון

'Like pangs upon a woman in labour my judgement will be revealed to them.'

Levy also follows a similar line of thinking when he speaks of YHWH giving voice 'to his emotions, his pity for his people and grief for their sufferings, like a woman in the agony of child-birth' (1925:151). The same idea lingers on in the more recent commentary of Sawyer, who mentions that 'the birth of a new age is painful, especially for the one who gives it birth' (1986:69).

<sup>8</sup> This idea of newness seems to enjoy the widest support among contemporary commentators. North talks about 'a new world will be born of the divine travail' (1964:114); so does Fohrer (1964:56), who suggests that the birth pangs signal the beginning of a new age when the exile draws to its end and divine redemption sets in. On the other hand, Westermann argues that what is highlighted in v.14a 'is not the pain of the woman in travail, but the change from long silence to crying out' (1966:88). Whybray also maintains that the simile is intended to convey not only a sudden burst of noise and commotion but also the idea that something new is about to be born' (1975:78).



focusing on the distinction between simile and metaphor, insisting that we must first of all abandon the thought of YHWH metaphorically giving birth to anything. She then goes on to argue that the one aspect of the behaviour of a woman in labour which constitutes the essence of the simile cannot be that of anguish or suffering. Echoing Schoors,<sup>9</sup> she draws attention to the auditory rather than the visual effect of the imagery and concludes 'that Yahweh's behavior resembles that of a travailing woman because of what proceeds from the throat of God' (567). Moreover, she also moves beyond Schoors to suggest that פָּעַף (a *hapax*) is better translated as 'to blow', citing Jastrow (1903:1202, s.v. פָּעַף, פָּעַף) for support. Thus it is the strong 'exhaling', 'gasping', and 'panting' of YHWH that presumably bring along the destructive changes outlined in v.15. In this way, 'the simile "like a travailing woman" has been transformed from one connoting fear-induced pain to one bespeaking power and might - an image which is equal in intensity to the warrior image that precedes it' (570).

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<sup>9</sup> 'The particle כִּי here means "like" and the *tertium comparationis* is not the condition of distress but the crying. We should not look for something concrete behind the image. The woman in travail is only a term of comparison to picture Yahwe's loud crying. In short, there is no metaphor but a simile' (Schoors 1973:91).

Consequently, there is no discrepancy between the two images of YHWH as the warrior and the woman in labour. On the contrary, Isa 42:14-17 must be seen as a further development and hence an integral part of vv.10-13. Although we are not supposed to deduce from the imagery any idea of a new birth, the sense of newness is in fact clearly present right at the beginning of the pericope, when various people groups are summoned to sing to YHWH a new song (שִׁיר חָדָשׁ). What is new about YHWH is that he will no longer remain quiet or restrained, but will manifest himself as the victorious warrior in action. The motif of divine power and sovereignty is further enhanced by this unique simile of the woman in labour, whose fierce and intense breathing reminds us of the power of YHWH's spirit (רוּחַ) or breath (נְשָׁמָה).<sup>10</sup> McKenzie observes that the transformation of nature in reverse as described in v.15 'does not seem [to be] a threat directed at any particular object; it is a statement of Yahweh's creative sovereignty, by which he can convert watered land into desert and desert into land rich with vegetation' (1968:44). Judging from Pss 74:15 and 107:33-36, we do not see why it cannot be both at the

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ps 18:16[15]; Job 4:9; Isa 40:7.

same time, especially when all the actions of YHWH depicted so far appear to be directed against his enemies (v.13b $\beta$ ). However, it does look a bit far-fetched if we want to interpret v.15 as the clearing of the way for the people in exile to return home (pace Schüpphaus 1971:173). On the other hand, the mentioning of YHWH's help to the blind clearly refers back to Isa 42:7, where the imagery of blindness and darkness represents unmistakably the distress of imprisonment. The release of the prisoners is part of the victory won by YHWH the warrior. Barstad is probably correct when he suggests that we should speak of the 'shepherd motif' instead of the 'Exodus motif' in both Isa 40:9-11 and 42:13-15, where we find 'the combination of the leading of the people (the blind, the flock) and the motif of Yahweh as a mighty warrior who destroys the enemies of Israel in his theophany', as 'the basic meaning of these texts is that Yahweh is now going to act to the benefit of his people' (1989:53). That is also precisely why we do not think it necessary to postulate any condemnatory sense in calling Israel in exile עִרְרִים (blind people). After all, the prophet is supposed to reassure them that YHWH has determined to carry out his promise (v.16b $\beta$ ), and the message as a whole is for encouragement and comfort. Once again, the sovereignty of YHWH and the salvation of his people are the two sides of the same coin.

Recognizing quite correctly that with Isa 42:16b $\beta$  the proclamation of YHWH's salvation reaches its climax, Elliger (1978:259 & 264) finds it difficult, though not impossible, to include v.17 as the original conclusion of the prophetic promise. This is certainly true if we consider vv.14-17 as an independent pericope. However, since we have already argued for the continuity between vv.10-13 and vv.14-17, it is not contradictory at all for us to take v.16b $\beta$  as the concluding zenith of the proclamation of vv.13-16, while at the same time to regard v.17 as the culmination of the entire victory song of vv.10-17. The putting to shame of those trusting in an image is a forceful way of expressing YHWH's unique sovereignty. Furthermore, the mentioning of the idols not only echoes YHWH's polemical declaration precisely against these idols in the previous pericope (Isa 42:8); in fact it also reminds us of the conclusion of the trial speech in Isa 41:21-29, with the final words of Isa 42:17, אַתֶּם אֱלֹהֵינוּ (You are our gods), undoubtedly bringing back the ironic challenge of 41:23a $\beta$ , וְיִדְעָה כִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם (That we may know indeed you are gods). Again, just as Isa 41:17-20 may be considered as the concluding pericope for the extended section Isa 41:1-20, here Isa 42:10-17 may also in the same vein be taken as the concluding pericope for the extended section Isa 41:21-42:17.

7.4 Isaiah 43:16-21

	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה <sup>16</sup>
וּבְמִים עֲזִים בְּתִיבָה:	הַבּוֹתֵן בַּיָּם דֶּרֶךְ
חֵל וְעֲזֹז	הַמּוֹצִיא רֶכֶב-וָסוּס <sup>17</sup>
דָּעֲכוּ כַפְשֶׁתָה כָּבוֹ:	יַחְדָּו וְשָׁכְבוּ בַל-דָּקוּמוּ
וְקִדְמָנוֹת אֶל-תִּתְפַּנְּבוּ:	אֶל-תִּזְכְּרוּ רֵאשִׁנוֹת <sup>18</sup>
עָתָה תִצְמַח הָלֹא תִדְעוּהָ	הַנְּבִי עֲשֵׂה תִדְשֶׁה <sup>19</sup>
בִּישְׁמוֹן בְּהָרוֹת:	אֲרִי אֲשִׁים בַּמִּדְבָּר דֶּרֶךְ
תִּבְרִים וּבְנוֹת יַעֲבֹה	תִּכְבְּדֵנִי חַיִּת הַשָּׂדֶה <sup>20</sup>
בְּהָרוֹת בְּשִׁימֹן	כִּי-נִתְתִּי בַמִּדְבָּר מִרֵם
עַם-זֶה יִצְרָתִי לִי <sup>21</sup>	לְהִשְׁקוֹת עַמִּי בְּחִירִי:
תִּהְיֶה לִי יִסְפְּרוּ:	

<sup>16</sup> Thus said YHWH,

The one setting in the sea a way,  
And in mighty waters a path;

<sup>17</sup> The one bringing out chariot and horse,

Army and mighty one. [arise,

Together they would lie down, no more would they  
They were extinguished, like the wick they were

<sup>18</sup> Do not remember former things! [quenched.

And previous things do not consider!

<sup>19</sup> Look at me making a new thing,

Now it is springing up, will you not know it?

Indeed I shall place in the wilderness a way,

In a desert streams.

<sup>20</sup>The animal of the field will honour me,

Jackals and ostriches;

For I have given in the wilderness waters,

Streams in a desert;

To give drink to my people, my chosen one,

<sup>21</sup>This people whom I have shaped for me,

My praise they will recount.

As recognized by Westermann (1966:104-105) and Schoors (1973:93-97), the major difficulty of categorizing this pericope as a proclamation of salvation lies in the identification of the reference to a lament at the beginning of the passage. Consequently, both scholars argue that the appeal in אַל-תִּזְכְּרִי (Do not remember; v.18a) does not really mean that the events of the first Exodus, presumably referred to in vv.16-17, are to be forgotten, because the verb carries a cultic function which in fact indicates the commemoration of YHWH's former saving acts made in a community lament, with the explicit intention to reproach the divine inaction against the present condition of distress. Thus what the people of YHWH in exile are actually being urged here is to 'stop mournfully looking back and clinging to the past' (Westermann 1966:105), and vv.16b & 17 are regarded as corresponding to the motif of the review of YHWH's former acts of salvation within a

community lament, and hence fulfilling the requirement of the genre of the proclamation of salvation. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that Schoors has carefully distinguished vv.16-17 as an introduction to the proclamation, allowing only v.18 to be the proper reference to the lament (1973:85).

However, Elliger (1978:343, 350-353) warns that such an interpretation of the verb זָכַר remains a questionable argument from silence, and agrees rather that vv.16-17 represent experiences of the pious worshippers of YHWH intended to prepare the audience effectively for the reception of the following oracle by arousing their memory of YHWH's acts of deliverance. In fact, the content of the expanded messenger formula may be drawn from a thanksgiving hymn, especially when we compare other expanded messenger formulae like Isa 42:5 or 45:18. After all, Elliger is certainly correct in asking why the prophet has not spoken more unequivocally but chosen these particular sentences of vv.16-17, which appear least representative of a community lament unless they are considered under the obligation of the supposed genre of the proclamation of salvation.

Moreover, it is essential for us to note that here vv.16-17 describe not the first Exodus in general, but more specifically the crossing of the sea

(v.16) and the defeat of Pharaoh's armies (v.17). There is no mentioning of divine guidance into the promised land, nor the miraculous provisions of food and drink in the desert. The focus is clearly upon the sovereign power of YHWH over the 'mighty waters' (מֵיִם עֲזִיִּים) as well as the 'mighty one' (עֲזִיָּז) of Egypt, and as a result of YHWH's supremacy, his people have been liberated from their enemies. Such an observation also brings us to the controversy of whether the promise in vv.19b-20 does indeed refer to a new Exodus from Babylon back to Jerusalem. Barstad quite rightly insists that the reference to the Exodus event in vv.16-17 does not necessarily have anything to do with a 'second Exodus', for its function is that of a hymnic epithet of YHWH, 'aiming at convincing the prophet's audience that Yahweh, the mighty god that once saved his people from the Egyptians in a miraculous way, again will act on behalf of his chosen people' (1989:97). He further argues that the motifs of roads and streams in the deserts should be taken as metaphorical expressions of the new prosperity of Judah brought along by the intervention of YHWH. These poetical metaphors all point towards 'the future salvation of the Judean people, i.e. their national restoration, their ingathering from the golah (not only from Babylon), and, last, but not least, victory over their enemies' (97-98).



The new thing which YHWH announces that he is making refers in fact primarily to the giving of water in the desert. It is true that YHWH will also 'place in the wilderness a way' (v.19ba), but immediately the following stich shifts to 'streams in a desert',<sup>11</sup> (v.19bβ). Here the way in the wilderness (דֶּרֶךְ) (בַּמִּדְבָּר) is undoubtedly a clear echo to the way in the sea (בַּיָּם דֶּרֶךְ), pointing towards the sovereign power of YHWH over the hostile forces of chaos. Moreover, if indeed the main emphasis of the promise lies in YHWH's guidance of his people through the desert, the allusion to the jackals and ostriches (v.20a) seems to be of no more significance than ornament. But if we understand the proclamation as referring to the theophanic manifestation of YHWH's sovereignty, then the imagery of these wild animals honouring YHWH becomes a necessary part of the universal response which reiterates YHWH's supremacy over all his creation. Furthermore, we have already come across the motif of YHWH giving drink to his thirsty people in Isa 41:17-20, where the transformation of deserts into oases becomes an extended

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<sup>11</sup> דָּ has נְחִיבִים or נְחִיבוֹת (paths), but מ is supported by all ancient versions. According to Orlinsky (1950:160-164), the Qumran reading cannot 'be given the status of a legitimate variant', not to mention the possibility of it being the original text.

metaphor for the radical reversal of Israel's fortune. Here Barstad's thesis may be upheld on at least one additional ground. The conclusion of the divine speech describes YHWH's chosen one as עַם-זֶרַע יִצְרָתִי לִי (a people I have shaped for me; v.21a), which reminds us of the description עַם-בְּזוּז וְשֹׁסֵר (a people robbed and plundered; Isa 42:22a) of the disputation in Isa 42:18-25. The people who were before imprisoned as if without a deliverer (Isa 42:22) have now got YHWH as their most powerful creator, who will liberate them from their captor just as he did in the past with the Egyptians at the sea. The parallel between then and now is not so much the journey through the desert but YHWH's victory over the apparently mighty enemies.

Once again we have found that the pericope of Isa 43:16-21 appears to be the concluding part of the section beginning from Isa 42:18. The vividly portrayed predicaments of the people in exile are answered by the affirmation of YHWH's ability to help. Considered against the context of such a literary unit, the appeal not to remember 'former things' (v.18) is much more naturally taken as referring to the plight of their being 'robbed and plundered'. The fact that in Isaiah 40-55, the term קְדָמִינִיּוֹת (previous things) can mean either very ancient times or more recent events has been

well explained by Elliger.<sup>12</sup> Despite their close proximity with each other, v.18 does not necessarily continue with vv.16-17 in the sense that the 'former things' are bound to denote what is mentioned in the previous verses. Elliger is certainly correct in reminding us that there is an obvious break between the expanded messenger formula, in which it is the prophet who speaks, and the actual divine speech, in which v.18 serves as an introduction to the climax of v.19.<sup>13</sup> After all, if the 'former things' do not allude to the great saving act of YHWH, there is no need whatsoever to postulate either a special cultic implication of the verb 'to remember' or a rhetorical exaggeration in the admonition. The meaning of the prophet is unequivocally simple, and the message is a consistent one of comfort

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<sup>12</sup> Elliger (1978:350-353); see especially Isa 45:21 and 46:10. While recognizing the special significance of the catastrophe of 587, Elliger prefers a more general interpretation of v.18: 'Let the past rest and direct your mind to the future, which I now announce!' (353). We go along with his arguments against Schoors, but in our opinion, the 'former things' should be more specifically defined.

<sup>13</sup> Elliger (1978:352-353). North also thinks that ראשונה here 'can only refer to the passage of the Red Sea' (1950:116). It appears that 'the clearest starting-point' of his attempt to understand what these 'former things' are does require some reconsideration.

and encouragement. The people formerly robbed and plundered will now experience the new liberation by their powerful creator.

#### 7.5 Isaiah 45:14-17

	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה <sup>14</sup>
וּסְבָאִים אֲנָשִׁי מִדָּחַ	וְגִיעַ מִצְרַיִם וּסְחָר-כּוּשׁ
אֲחֻרָיוּ גִלְכּוּ בְזָקִים וַעֲבֹדוּ	עָלָיו וַעֲבֹדוּ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה
אֵלָיו וְתִפְלָלוּ	וְאֵלָיו וְשִׁתְחֹדוּ
אֶפֶס אֱלֹהִים:	אֵף בָּךְ אֵל וְאִין עוֹד
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעַ:	אֲכֵן אֶתָּה אֵל מְסֻתָּר <sup>15</sup>
הִלְכּוּ בְּקִלְמָה תְּרָשִׁי צִירִים:	בּוֹשׁוּ וְגַם-נִכְלְמוּ כָל־מִן וְיִתְדוּ <sup>16</sup>
תִּשְׁוַעַת עוֹלָמִים	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בּוֹשֵׁעַ בִּיהֲוָה <sup>17</sup>
עַד-עוֹלָמִי עַד:	לֹא-תִבְשׁוּ וְלֹא-תִכְלְמוּ

<sup>14</sup> Thus said YHWH:

The wealth of Egypt and the gain of Kush,

And Sabaeans, people of stature; [become,

Towards you they will pass over and yours they will

After you they will go, in chains they will pass

And to you they will prostrate themselves, [over.

To you they will pray:<sup>14</sup>

Surely with you is El and none other,

<sup>14</sup> L's וְשִׁתְחֹדוּ requires to be corrected to וְשִׁתְחֹדוּ, which is found in many other Mss.

No other gods.

<sup>15</sup> Certainly you are El hiding himself,

O God of Israel, Saviour!

<sup>16</sup> Ashamed and also disgraced - all of them together,

They have gone in disgrace - craftsmen of idols.

<sup>17</sup> Israel has been saved by YHWH,

A salvation of ages;

You will not be ashamed nor disgraced,

Until ages to come.

It is puzzling how Westermann may on the one hand regard Isa 45:14-17 as 'a combination of fragments' while on the other hand maintain that it belongs to the group of texts which adhere to the basic structure of the genre of the proclamation of salvation (1964b:120, 1966:137). In his most recent discussion, he still includes Isa 45:14-17 as one of the fragmentary independent units of the genre (1987:36). Perhaps he wants to see v.14 as a fragment of a proclamation of salvation, but then there is no evidence of its original structure. If indeed these verses are no more than fragments, then we simply cannot determine their genre at all. However, the question remains whether such is necessarily the case. The confession of the nations (v.14) and the exposure of the disgrace of idolatry (v.16) are both integral parts of the theme of YHWH as the saviour of Israel (vv.15 & 17). Having considered in

detail the arguments for and against the unity of these verses, Spykerboer concludes that v.14 is 'an address put in the mouth of the nations by Yahweh and spoken to a restored Jerusalem', with vv.16-17 'as a continuation of the profession by non-Israelites in vs.14', and only v.15 taken 'as an "Amen" gloss by a reader' (1976:140). Hermisson (1987:33-34) is also uncomfortable with the fragment hypothesis, and in his opinion v.14 is a divine address to Zion, followed by a prophetic speech first addressed to YHWH (v.15) and subsequently to Israel (v.17b).<sup>15</sup> Thus the problem of discontinuity apparently lies between vv.14 and 15, where the addressee is suddenly shifted from the human to the divine. Nevertheless, such a change occurs within the context of a prayerful confession, and there is no reason why the nations' confession should not be directed first to Zion (v.14b $\beta$ ) and then, as an appropriate climax, to YHWH himself (v.15). Furthermore, the address of YHWH as אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל in v.15 seems to suggest strongly the

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<sup>15</sup> Concerning Westermann's fragment hypothesis, Hermisson argues that even if the original prophetic words are preserved only in fragments, they will more likely be handed down in a new literary unit, for the collection of the fragments is not the business of the prophetic tradents. Moreover, the 'fragmentary' impression may owe itself more to literary extrapolations of the text.

identity of the speaker as an outsider who does not know YHWH's holy name. As a result, it seems to us that Isa 45:14-17 can be taken altogether as a divine speech addressed to the people of YHWH, with a direct quotation of the confession by the nations at its highlight.<sup>16</sup>

Another equally complex question that needs to be settled is whether Isa 45:14-17 belong to the preceding or the following pericope. Many commentators<sup>17</sup> consider vv.14-25 as one continuous unit, but that is turning a blind eye to the conspicuous new beginning of the trial speech in vv.20-25 as well as the change of subject matter between vv.14-17 and vv.18-19. The nations' homage to Jerusalem (עִירִי 'my city': the feminine noun in v.13 there also explains the feminine pronouns in v.14) serves to underline the immediately preceding promises that YHWH will rebuild Jerusalem (Isa 44:26-28; 45:13), just as in v.15 the confession by the nations addressing YHWH as 'El hiding himself' (אֵל מְסֻתָּר) has aptly summarized the unexpected event of

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<sup>16</sup> That the name of YHWH is mentioned in the third person within a divine speech by YHWH himself is not without precedent. Cf. Isa 41:16 & 20.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. for example North (1964:155-162), McKenzie (1968:80-84), Clifford (1984b:122-127), and Sawyer (1986:96-100).

YHWH acting through Cyrus.<sup>18</sup> From Isa 45:18 onwards, it is true that the motif of YHWH's uniqueness is being further developed, but the emphasis is no longer upon Cyrus, and the notion of YHWH's 'hiddenness' has now been turned upside down: 'Not in hiddenness (בְּסֵתֶר) have I spoken' (v.19aα = 48:16aα. Cf. Isa 54:8; 57:17; 59:2; 64:6[7]; and 8:17).

Therefore, once again we have examined a passage in which evidence for an independent genre of the proclamation of salvation seems lacking, but there is sufficient indication that it is another pericope concluding a group of passages, which in this case are all concerned directly with YHWH acting through Cyrus to bring along his salvation to the city of Jerusalem. YHWH's sovereign power as Israel's saviour is here given

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<sup>18</sup> Pace Clifford (1984b:125), who relates YHWH's hiddenness to Israel's eclipse; or McKenzie (1968:83), who describes YHWH's attaching himself to the pitiful remnant of Israel as both a wonder and a scandal. In contrast, Westermann sees v.15 as 'a theological summary of Cyrus oracle', expressing 'an insight of the highest importance' that 'God's action in history is a hidden one', i.e., YHWH acts 'on behalf of his people by means of a pagan monarch' (1966:138-139). It remains an exegetical irony that he should regard such an essential statement as a gloss instead of the original climax of the confession.



a theological subtlety. In contending for YHWH's control over Cyrus from his absolute authority as the supreme creator, our prophet is also fully aware of the ambiguity of human history, from the reality of which he intends to ground his faith in the one true God of Israel.

#### 7.6 Isaiah 49:8-13

גֵּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל קְדוֹשׁ	<sup>07</sup> כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
לְעֶבֶד מַשְׁלִים	לְבִזְזָה-בְּפֶשׁ לְמַתְעֵב גּוֹי
שָׂרִים וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ	מַלְכִּים וְרָאוּ וְקָמוּ
קְדֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיִבְחָרָךְ:	לְמַעַן יִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶמֶן
	<sup>08</sup> כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
וּבְיוֹם יְשׁוּעָה עֲזָרְתִּיךָ	בַּעֲת רָצוֹן עֲנִיתִיךָ
לְבָרִית עַם	וְאֶצְרָךְ וְאֶתְנָךְ
לְהַנְחִיל בְּתִלּוֹת שְׂמֻמוֹת:	לְהַקִּים אֶרֶץ
לְאֲשֶׁר בַּחֲשֹׁךְ הִגְלוּ	<sup>09</sup> לְאֹמֶר לְאִסּוּרִים צָאוּ
וּבְכָל-שָׁפְיִים מִרְעִיָּהֶם:	עַל-דְּרָכִים יִרְעוּ
וְלֹא-יָכֹם שָׂרֵב וְשֹׁמֵשׁ	<sup>10</sup> לֹא יִרְעֲבוּ וְלֹא יִצְמָאוּ
וְעַל-מְבוּעֵי מַיִם יִבְהַלֵּם:	כִּי-מִרְחֻקֶּם יִבְהַגֵּם
וּמִסֵּלְתֵי יְרֵמוֹן:	<sup>11</sup> וְשִׁמְתִּי כָל-חֲרִי לְדָרְךָ
וְהִנֵּחַ-אֱלֹה מִצְפּוֹן וּמָיִם	<sup>12</sup> תִּהְיֶה-אֱלֹה מִרְחֹק רִבְאוּ
וְאֱלֹה מֵאֶרֶץ סִינַיִם:	
יִפְצְחוּ חָרִים רַבָּה	<sup>13</sup> רָבוּ שָׁמַיִם וְגִילֵי אֶרֶץ
וַעֲגִזּוּ יְרֵחָם:	כִּי-גָחַם יְהוָה עִמּוֹ

<sup>07</sup> Thus said YHWH,<sup>19</sup>

The redeemer of Israel, his Holy One;  
To someone despised,<sup>20</sup> to a nation abhorred,  
To a slave of rulers:  
Kings will see, and will rise,  
Princes - and they will prostrate themselves.  
Because of YHWH who is faithful,  
The Holy One of Israel, and he has chosen you.

<sup>08</sup> Thus said YHWH,

In a time of favour I have answered you,  
And on a day of salvation I have helped you.  
And I shall shape<sup>21</sup> you and I shall appoint you

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<sup>19</sup> Although it seems to us that the pericope begins with Isa 49:8, our discussion will include v.7, for many form-critics like Westermann (1966:172), McKenzie (1968:107), Schoors (1973:97), and Whybray (1975:140) are all of the opinion that the pericope begins at v.7.

<sup>20</sup> Literally 'to a despising of soul'. The passive meaning is supported by the variant לְבָזוֹי (Qal passive participle) of בָּזָא and some of the ancient versions like א and C, while North (1964:190) thinks that there is no difference in meaning between בָּזָא and בָּזוֹי. But Levy on the other hand conjectures that the Masoretic pointing is probably intended 'to prevent this from being a reference to Israel' (1925:225).

<sup>21</sup> The root may be either יָצַר (to shape) or נָצַר (to keep), the latter of which is supported by B. However, the pairing of יִצְרֶנִּי and יִנְצְרֶנִּי seems to suggest the former being the correct one. Cf. Isa 49:5-6, where the

- For a covenant of a people;<sup>22</sup>  
 To establish land,  
 To distribute desolated possessions.  
<sup>09</sup>Saying to prisoners: Come out!  
 To those in darkness: Show yourself!  
 Along roads they will feed,  
 And on all barren heights are their food.  
<sup>10</sup>They will not be hungry, nor will they be thirsty,  
 Nor will burning heat and sun smite them;  
 For he who has compassion on them will guide them,  
 And by springs of waters he will make them rest.  
<sup>11</sup>And I shall change all my mountains into the way;  
 And my highways will be raised.  
<sup>12</sup>Look! These will come from afar,

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same two verbs יָצַר and וְנִתְחַדָּשׁ occur, and יָצַר מִבֶּטֶן must be derived from the root יָצַר. See also Elliger (1978:223 & 233), who thinks that וְנִתְחַדָּשׁ in Isa 42:6b (pairing with וְנִתְחַדָּשׁ again) means 'shaped' rather than 'guard'.

<sup>22</sup> The phrase בְּרִית עִם, which occurs only here and in Isa 42:6, remains a *crux interpretum*. See the extensive review by Stamm (1971) and a more recent discussion by Smith (1981). NJB translates 'a covenant of the people' in 42:6, but it changes to 'the covenant for a people' in 49:8. NIV also has 'a covenant for the people', NRSV has 'a covenant to the people', and NJSP has 'a covenant people'. REB's 'a light for peoples' (parallel to 'a lamp for nations' in 42:6) is bold, but is difficult to justify.

And look! These are from North and from West,

And these are from the land of Sinim.

<sup>13</sup> Shout, Heavens! And rejoice, Earth!

And break forth,<sup>23</sup> mountains, with a ringing cry!

For YHWH has comforted his people,

And to his afflicted he will show compassion.

In order to make the pericope of Isa 49:7-12 correspond to the structure of the genre of the proclamation of salvation, both Westermann (1966:173) and Schoors (1973:103) must first transpose v.7aβ+b after v.12 as the final statement of goal and then remove the messenger formula at the beginning of v.8. With confidence, Westermann pronounces that '[t]hese two changes allow us to rediscover Deutero-Isaiah's original utterance' (*ibid.*). However, such changes can only be justified if we are certain that the pericope is indeed a proclamation of salvation as depicted by Westermann, and that it actually begins from v.7. Schoors has rightly commented that the second half of v.7 'makes no sense on its own and should belong to a larger whole, because it refers to something the kings see and which is not expressly indicated' (100), but it does not necessarily make it the conclusion of vv.8-12. If the

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<sup>23</sup> Following the Qere רַפְּצֹתוֹ, which is supported by פִּצְּצוֹ of Q<sup>a</sup>.

homage by foreign kings could be related by a redactor to the activity of the servant in Isa 49:1-6, it is equally possible for v.7 to be the original conclusion of the preceding pericope.<sup>24</sup> The fact that v.7 is addressed to Israel is not inconsistent with what goes before, because the 'servant' has also been explicitly identified as 'Israel' in v.3. Moreover, our examination of the previous pericopae which Westermann categorizes as proclamations of salvation fails to uphold a rigid structure that must contain a reference to the community lament at its beginning and a goal at the end. On the contrary, one of these promises of salvation (Isa 42:10-17) even begins with a hymn of praise, and we are therefore of the opinion that vv.8-13 may be considered together as another pericope of the promise of salvation.

In fact, the content of vv.8-13 appears to offer familiar motifs already present in the previous promises: YHWH answering his people (v.8a = Isa 41:17), divine guidance of the liberated prisoners (vv.9-10 =

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<sup>24</sup> Commentators who are not bound by Westermann's thesis of an independent genre of the proclamation of salvation also recognize v.7 as a prophecy of salvation distinct from vv.8-13. See Melugin (1976:143) and Sawyer (1986:122).

Isa 42:16), and provision of water (v.10b $\beta$  = Isa 43:20). Even the last two motifs of mountains changing into highways (v.11 = Isa 40:3-4) and the people of Israel returning from afar (v.12 = Isa 43:6) are not unheard of before. Thus it is not exceptional at all for the divine speech to repeat that YHWH will appoint Israel 'as a covenant of a people' (v.8b $\alpha$  = Isa 42:6). Although we do not know exactly what this expression לְבְרִית עִם means, in both contexts it seems to be closely related to the emancipation of prisoners.<sup>25</sup> In other words, there is no need to postulate that v.8b $\alpha$  is a redactional insertion foreign to its environment (*pace* Westermann 1966:173).

Once again Barstad insists that in this passage there is no reference to the Exodus tradition, the return of exiles through the desert, or the going out from Babylon. 'The only conclusion we are allowed to draw. . . is that the purpose of the poetical, and clearly metaphorical, expressions found in 49:8-12 is to inform the prophet's audience, in a language that was familiar to them, that Yahweh will now take care of his people and look after them' (1989:59). Whereas the

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<sup>25</sup> But whether Hillers (1978:175-182) is correct in arguing that the phrase itself indeed means 'emancipation or clearing of the people' remains doubtful.

metaphor of the prisoners is a general description of the miserable situation of the Judeans in Jerusalem, the motifs of YHWH's guidance and provisions refer to the bright future of the inhabitants of Judah. It is indeed true that no specific words for the desert or the wilderness are found, and that those returning from afar come from both North and West, with the name of 'Sinim', but not that of 'Babylon', being mentioned. However, it seems more likely that the ones who return (v.12) are the liberated prisoners (v.9a) who have been under the guidance and protection of YHWH along their homeward journey (vv.9b-11). The picture in fact describes the bringing back of the survivors of Israel, which is what YHWH is going to achieve through his servant, the Israel strengthened and renewed (Isa 49:5-6). The emphasis is upon YHWH's sovereign power. Israel the servant is able to demand her survivors back precisely because YHWH will 'shape' and 'appoint' him with the divine authority. The return of Israel is not just one of the many motifs of future restoration; it is the main theme of this pericope of the promise of YHWH's salvation and help.

Isa 49:8-13 concludes with an exhortation of praise directed towards the heavens, the earth, and the mountains. The entire universe responds appropriately to the manifestation of YHWH's sovereignty and power in his salvation for his people Israel. However, we do not

think that the hymnic element (v.13) always indicates the end of a section (pace Melugin 1976:123). On the contrary, it seems to us that the section beginning from Isa 49:1 does not come to its end until Isa 49:26. While it is true to observe that Isa 49:1-13 focuses on Israel the servant and Isa 49:14-26 on Zion the mother, the two halves nevertheless share the same basic motifs: they both begin with a complaint against YHWH (vv.4a & 14), the divine speeches in reply promise the release of the prisoners in exile (vv.9 & 25) and the safe return of the surviving children from afar (vv.5-6, 12, & 20-22), resulting in the foreign kings prostrating themselves in recognition of YHWH's salvation and power (vv.7 & 23). Consequently, Isa 49:8-13 may be classified as another promise of salvation, but this time it does not serve as a concluding pericope of one section.

## **7.7 Summary**

Our examination of the five passages which Westermann designates as independent pericopae of the proclamations of salvation may lead to the following four observations:

Firstly, Westermann's thesis of the new genre of the proclamation of salvation must be deemed unsustainable. Only Isa 41:17-20 can fit the proposed



structure of (a) an allusion to a communal lament; (b) an announcement of God's turning; (c) a description of divine intervention; and (d) a final statement of goal. Isa 42:14-17 has instead a final statement of consequence, and is closely connected to a hymn. There is no reference to any lament at all in Isa 43:16-21, unless we follow Westermann's argument in stretching the meaning of 'remember'. Isa 49:7-12 is again without a final statement of goal until the text is substantially transposed. Lastly, even Westermann himself recognizes in Isa 45:14-17 no complete structure of a proclamation of salvation, and hence he brackets it as fragmentary.

Secondly, we may follow Elliger's suggestion to label these pericopae as promises of salvation. They are indeed without a rigid structure; nevertheless they unmistakably announce YHWH's salvation for his people Israel. The situation is not unlike that of the polemic genres in Isaiah 40-55, where we find the more well constructed trial speeches together with the two groups of disputations, which share a common theme but do not exhibit a typical structure. The same can be said about the salvation speeches, for again we have the more carefully structured oracles of salvation as well as these promises of salvation, which also share a common theme but equally defy any stereotype in form.

Thirdly, we agree with Barstad that the underlying theme of these promises of salvation should not be restricted to the so-called 'second Exodus'. The homecoming from Babylon is only one part of the gathering of Israel from all four corners of the earth, and even the liberation of the people in exile constitutes only the beginning of the reversal of their fortune. The imagery of the transformation of nature indeed points to the restoration of Israel, but it ultimately points to the sovereign power of YHWH, who will now act to deliver his own people. Just as in the disputations, the trial speeches, and the oracles of salvation, the theme of these promises of salvation remains clearly focused upon YHWH's absolute power and sovereign might. However, there is also the more sophisticated recognition that YHWH's sovereignty may be a hidden one, just as there is an equal degree of theological subtlety in identifying the blind Israel as the witness of YHWH's unique supremacy within the trial speeches. Such discussions also prepare us for the reinterpretation of the suffering of Israel as YHWH's servant as well as the paradoxical revelation of YHWH's almighty power in the apparent powerlessness of his people as delineated in the so-called 'Servant Songs'.

Finally, we have discovered that among the five pericopae examined, four of them appear to be the

concluding unit of a poetic section. Isa 49:8-13 is the one exception, which reminds us that the promise of salvation may not necessarily be always the conclusion. In fact, if Westermann is correct in locating similar pericopae in larger units (such as Isa 48:14-26 and Isa 51:9-52:3), we expect to find these promises of salvation in either the beginning, the middle, or indeed the final positions of a group of passages. However, the recognition of the concluding nature of many of these promises does help to throw some light on the intricate problem of the structure of Isaiah 40-55. In the next chapter, we shall venture to explore the relationship between the theme and the structure of these sixteen chapters.

## CHAPTER 8

### THEME AND STRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 40-55

#### 8.1 Introduction

The overall structure of Isaiah 40-55 is an intriguing problem. Despite the general consensus over the unity and consistency of these sixteen chapters, there is no agreement as to their composition and structure at all.<sup>1</sup> While the two approaches of form criticism and rhetorical criticism need not become mutually exclusive in the study of the prophetic pericopae; nevertheless, commentators remain hesitant in deciphering or establishing any recognizable pattern in

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<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the wide range of scholarly opinions, see Melugin (1976:77-82) and Spykerboer (1976:1-29). It is instructive to observe that even these two dissertations do not attempt to argue for a macro-structure of Isaiah 40-55, though they have set out to explain the 'formation' or 'composition' of these chapters.

their comprehensive arrangement.<sup>2</sup> While Westermann argues for the significance of the various speech forms in understanding the prophet's message, he is also convinced of 'a deliberate, orderly arrangement' of such forms that may indicate the work of an original author instead of a subsequent redactor (1966:26). However, he seems content to see Isaiah 40-55 as divided into four major parts (chs.40-44; 45-48; 49-53; and 54-55), distinct in their respective forms and contents, but apparently without further identifiable linkage among them. On the other hand, Muilenburg detects structural patterns within the internal arrangements of the strophes of an extended poem, but he has not presented an overall structure of his twenty-one poems in Isaiah 40-55 either (1956:386-393).<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the recent attempt of Laato (1990) to explore the composition of Isaiah 40-55 deserves our examination.<sup>4</sup> He suggests that Isa 40-53

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<sup>2</sup> Spykerboer (1976:13) aptly points out that both Muilenburg and Westermann have in fact paid attention to the individual pericopae as well as the larger literary poems.

<sup>3</sup> Subsequent commentators following the rhetorical approach have not done any better; cf. Gitay (1981) and Clifford (1984b).

<sup>4</sup> Laato has in fact discussed only the composition

has a chiastic macro-structure with five cycles, which display alternately a chiastic and a parallel arrangements of their respective units:

	40:1-2	Prologue
Cycle 1	40:3-42:17	Return to Jerusalem
Cycle 2	42:14-44:8	Babylon's fall (predicted)
Cycle 3	44:9-46:2	Cyrus
Cycle 4	46:3-48:21	Babylon's fall (realized)
Cycle 5	48:20-52:12	Rebuilding of Jerusalem
	52:13-53:12	Epilogue

To support his proposal, Laato explains in great detail how he arrives at the identification of each pair of parallel units in all five cycles. He also comments extensively on the content as well as the relationship of these cycles.

Although Laato's attempt is both worthwhile and attractive, there are some major difficulties as far as his methodology is concerned. Firstly, in many cases

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of Isa 40-53, for the last two chapters are considered to be 'a summary' which 'does not belong to the macro-structure of Isaiah 40-53' (1990:208 & 222), and he does not elaborate on how Isa 54 & 55 are related to the preceding literary entity.

of the pairing up of parallel units, Laato often focuses on elements which are common but may not be essential. Let us take his first cycle as an illustration:

40:3-8	a			
9-11		b		
12-26			c	
27-31				d
41:1-7				e
8-20				F
21-29				e'
42:1-4			d'	
5-9			c'	
10-13		b'		
14-17	a'			

Within this first cycle, he considers 40:27-31 parallel to 42:1-4 because of the word **מְשֹׁמֵם** being shared by both units. However, it is doubtful if this word does indeed represent a theme common to these two pericopae. The same objection may be raised concerning whether the description of YHWH as the creator together with the critique of idols may be considered as a sufficient indicator of a thematic parallel between the two units of 40:12-26 and 42:5-9. As a result, Laato may have correctly detected a thematical and terminological parallel between 41:1-7

and 41:21-29, but he appears to be wrong in developing from it a chiastic cycle in 40:3-42:17.

Secondly, there are various inconsistencies within Laato's proposed macro-structure that he fails to resolve. To begin with, he views 44:9-20 and 45:14-46:2 as a frame of the third cycle, as both passages seem to share the theme of ridiculing the idols. Granted that 45:14-46:2 is indeed focusing on the nothingness of idols, the passage consists of four formally distinct units, namely, a promise in 45:14-17, a disputation in 45:18-19, a trial speech in 45:20-25, and the beginning of another disputation in 46:1-2. Without raising the further question of continuity in 46:1-7, there is at least this problem of pairing up an extended yet unified poem (44:9-20) with a conglomeration of pericopae. Moreover, Laato does not offer any explanation why the prologue (40:1-2) and the epilogue (52:13-53:12) of this macro-structure display such marked differences in both content and form, not to mention their very obvious imbalance in length. These obvious problems must therefore cast doubt on the validity of the proposed structure as a whole.

On the other hand, the earlier endeavour by Goldingay (1979) to identify the arrangement of Isaiah 41-45, though more limited in scope, seems to offer a



more promising starting point. Based on 'certain parallels and sequences in form, motif, and vocabulary', he proposes two sets of parallel sequences, namely, 41:1-20 and 41:21-42:17, each made up of three parallel elements; and 42:18-43:21 and 43:22-45:8, each made up of four parallel elements. In the first set of sequences, both begin with a trial speech against the nations, move on to a divine oracle, and conclude with a so-called proclamation of salvation. In the second set, both sequences also begin with a so-called trial speech against Israel, move on to a salvation oracle and a trial speech against the idols, and finally conclude once again with a so-called proclamation of salvation. As a result, the elements are seen to be parallel not only in motif and function but also in form, and the overall arrangement is marked by clear simplicity and easily recognizable repetitions.

Consequently, we intend to examine in greater detail Goldingay's proposal, and to extend his method of investigation beyond chapter 44 into the rest of Isaiah 40-55. By applying the same principles which have been employed with such success in the earlier parallel sequences, we may further analyse the relationship among the subsequent pericopae accordingly, so as to arrive at a better understanding of the comprehensive shape of Isaiah 40-55.

## 8.2 Isaiah 41:1-20 & 41:21-42:17

Goldingay proposes the following parallel sequences for 41:1-42:17 (1979:290):

### 41:1-20 (Sequence A)

### 41:21-42:17 (Sequence B)

#### 1. Trial speech: YHWH vs nations

41:1-7

41:21-29

Who moves in history?

Who explains history?

#### 2. Oracle of salvation / installation

41:8-16

42:1-9 (10-13)

Israel as YHWH's servant  
will experience the defeat  
of his oppressors.

Israel as YHWH's servant  
will bring deliverance to  
the oppressed.

#### 3. Proclamation of salvation

41:17-20

42:14-17

YHWH turns desert into  
garden.

YHWH turns garden into  
desert.

On the whole we tend to agree with Goldingay's analysis of 41:1-42:17 into two threefold sequences. As we have observed, 42:10-13 in fact belongs to vv.14-17 and there is no need to 'treat them as

appendages' (Goldingay 1979:291), but this little disagreement does not alter the validity of the general structure of the two sequences. Moreover, as we have also pointed out, the two pericopae of promise (41:17-20 & 42:10-17) echo with the two trial speeches (41:1-7 & 41:21-29), and their function as a concluding passage reiterates the integrity of the two sequences.

Our major disagreement with Goldingay's proposal concerns rather the theme of these sequences. Goldingay focuses much of his attention on what he calls 'the first two servant passages in Isaiah xl-lv' (1979:290), whereas to us the highlight should instead be upon the actions of YHWH. In the trial speech (41:1-7) the question 'who has worked and made (עָשָׂה)' (v.4aα) is raised by YHWH himself as a challenge issued to the idol-worshipping nations, who are found shaken by the speedy victory of a new world conqueror (vv.5-7). YHWH then continues in the salvation oracle of 41:8-13 to assure Israel of his help against the enemies, and the focus remains clearly on YHWH strengthening and empowering his servant Israel. The third pericope of salvation promises (41:17-20) further highlights the manifestation of YHWH's powerful act of salvation, so that in conclusion his own people will recognize 'that the hand of YHWH has made (עָשָׂה) this' (v.20bα).

The same emphasis on YHWH's action runs through the second sequence as well. In the trial speech in 41:21-29 the challenge for the nations' deities is not to predict or explain history, but to 'do anything good or bad' (v.23b $\alpha$ ). These deities turn out to be nothing because their work (פִּעַל) is nil (v.24a), and they are evil because their deeds (מַעֲשִׂים) are empty (v.29a). The following pericope in 42:1-9, which is usually known as the first servant song, is in fact another divine oracle promising strength and victory for YHWH's chosen servant. The precise identity of the servant may be a moot point within the speech itself, although in its present context Israel has just been named the servant in the preceding oracle of salvation. There is also sufficient evidence to link the pericope to what goes before and after it. The mentioning of the idols in v.8 reminds the audience of the preceding trial speech, while the mission of the servant reaching out to coastlands and nations (v.4b) is echoed by the summons to sing the praise of YHWH from all corners of the earth at the beginning of the following salvation promise (v.10). But above all the focus is still upon what YHWH is going to do through his servant, for the obvious contrast between the idols' inability to act and YHWH's supreme control of former things and new things (41:22-23; 42:9) must not be allowed to slip out of sight. The contrast is given a further theological twist

in the concluding salvation promise in 42:10-17, when YHWH declares that he will no longer be inactive but will act like a warrior and manifest his power over the enemies. As a consequence of what YHWH has done (עָשִׂיתָם), the idol worshippers are being utterly put to shame (vv.16b-17).

Therefore, we may conclude that 41:1-20 and 41:21-42:17 are two sequences focusing on YHWH's powerful action rather than the destiny of the servant Israel. Both sequences begin with a trial speech and conclude with a salvation promise. The middle pericopae are not formally the same, but they share the same theme of YHWH strengthening and acting through his servant. Within each sequence the three pericopae are closely linked to each other both in terms of content and vocabulary. Goldingay describes the two sequences as parallel yet not without development (1979:294), but perhaps it is more accurate to view the second sequence as repeating as well as developing the central motifs of the first. As a result, we have a modified outline of the two sequences as follows:

41:1-20 (Sequence A)

41:21-42:17 (Sequence B)

1. Trial speech

41:1-7

41:21-29

Who has acted?

Idols cannot act.

2. Oracle of salvation / commission

41:8-16

42:1-9

YHWH strengthens Israel.

YHWH strengthens servant.

3. Promise of salvation

41:17-20

42:10-17

YHWH has acted.

Praise of YHWH's action.

**8.3 Isaiah 42:18-43:21 & 43:22-44:23**

Goldingay goes on to identify two further sequences beginning with 42:18 (1979:294):

42:18-43:21 (Sequence C)

43:22-45:8 (Sequence D)

1. Trial speech: YHWH vs Israel

42:18-25

43:22-28

Israel too blind in her  
sin to be YHWH's servant.

Israel makes YHWH her  
servant with her sin.

2. Oracle of salvation

43:1-7

44:1-5

YHWH redeems a people  
who bear his name.

YHWH recreates a people  
to bear his name.

### 3. Trial speech: YHWH vs idols

43:8-13

44:6-23

YHWH is the only God.

Idols are futile.

### 4. Proclamation of salvation

43:14-21

44:24-45:8

YHWH will defeat Babylon

YHWH will rebuild

(named for first time).

Jerusalem by Cyrus

(named for first time).

Goldingay is certainly correct in seeing a new beginning with 42:18-25 as a different kind of polemical speech, which we would prefer to classify under the second group of disputations. The argument is no longer against the nations and their deities, but hinges on YHWH's faithfulness to Israel; for the word of disputation intends not to condemn but to comfort the people of YHWH. The theme of vv.18-25 focuses on the recognition of Israel as 'a people robbed and plundered' and apparently 'without a deliverer' (v.21). Nevertheless, YHWH is still the one in control (v.24), and in the following salvation oracle in 43:1-7 he declares his salvation to his people according to their specific plights. The fact that YHWH remains the powerful sovereign God is expressed through the language of creation (43:1 & 7) as well as the subsequent trial speech in 43:8-13, where he reiterates that there is no

other El or saviour apart from himself (vv.10-11), and that the people of Israel in all their weaknesses are now identified as YHWH's witness. 43:14-15 seem to be a further announcement attached to the trial speech,<sup>5</sup> but because we are not very sure of its exact meaning, it is a bit risky to place too much emphasis on these two verses.<sup>6</sup> The final pericope of a salvation promise (43:16-21) refers back to Israel's exile as the 'former things' to be forgotten, for YHWH is going to bring along his deliverance as 'something new' (v.18-20), and Israel will be transformed from being 'a people robbed and plundered' (42:22a) into 'a people whom I [i.e. YHWH] have formed for myself' (43:21a). Once again we find that the focus is primarily on YHWH's sovereign power to deliver his own people Israel.

The next sequence begins also with a word of disputation (43:22-28), in which the question of Israel's sin is being addressed. However, it is important to take note of the fact that the main thrust

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<sup>5</sup> In two other trial speeches, namely, Isa 41:1-4 and 45:20-23, similar appendices (41:5-7 and 45:24-25) are also found.

<sup>6</sup> *Pace* Laato (1990:217), who considers Isa 43:14-15 as the center of the second cycle of 42:14-44:8, or Goldingay (1979:298), who puts a special significance on the fact that Babylon is first named here.



of the argument is upon Israel's sinfulness in the past, as the discussions in vv.22-24 and vv.27-28 are carried out in the 'complete' or 'perfect' tense, and that YHWH describes himself as the one 'blotting out your rebellions' (v.25a). The intention to comfort instead of to condemn is again enhanced in the following salvation oracle in 44:1-8,<sup>7</sup> where YHWH's saving help is manifested among Israel's offspring (v.3; as an explicit contrast to the sinning of their first father in 43:27a). Towards the end of the oracle, YHWH again repeats that his own people are the witnesses to his sovereignty, because they have already experienced YHWH's authority in past events, and they are going to experience his supreme power in the coming deliverance (vv.6-8). On the contrary, the futility of idol worship constitutes the motif of the third pericope of 44:9-20, which mocks those who fashion an image (vv.12-15) and pray to it for deliverance (v.17), only to find out that 'it does not save his life' (v.20).

But Goldingay is wrong to consider 44:24-45:8 as the conclusion of the second sequence for the following three reasons. First of all, the passage

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<sup>7</sup> Our previous examination of the form of the oracle of salvation suggests that Isa 44:6-8 should be included as an integral part of the pericope.

44:24-45:8 contains three distinct formal units, namely, a salvation promise (44:21-23), a word of disputation on YHWH's sovereignty (44:24-28), and an oracle concerning Cyrus (45:1-8). It would be anomalous to group them together as a single element within the sequence. Moreover, beginning with 44:24, we are clearly into a new sequence of pericopae focusing on the relationship between YHWH and Cyrus (cf. Spykerboer 1976:129-130 and Hermisson 1987:15). Here Goldingay is perhaps misled by the wrong signals concerning the mention for the first time of the names of Babylon and Cyrus. Furthermore, the pericope in 44:21-23 appears to be a concluding element (cf. Lack 1973:95-99, Melugin 1976:121-122, and Sweeney 1988:72-76), for, as we see it, the word of exhortation in 44:21-23 (Elliger 1978:443) echoes the opening disputation in 43:22-28 by reiterating the fact that YHWH has 'blotted out' Israel's 'rebellions' (v.22a). Therefore, we have arrived at a modified pair of sequences C and D different from the one proposed by Goldingay:

42:18-43:21 (Sequence C)

43:22-44:24 (Sequence D)

# 1. Disputation on YHWH's faithfulness

42:18-25

43:22-28

Israel without a deliverer?      What about Jacob's sin?

## 2. Oracle of salvation

43:1-7

44:1-8

YHWH is your saviour.

YHWH is your redeemer.

## 3. Trial speech / Satire

43:8-15

44:9-20

YHWH's unique sovereignty

Idols' futility is

is witnessed to by Israel.

self-evident.

## 4. Promise of salvation / Exhortation

43:16-20

44:21-23

YHWH will deliver his  
people.

YHWH has blotted out his  
people's rebellion.

It is clear from the above outline how the two sequences of 42:18-43:21 and 43:22-44:23 both repeat and develop the theme of YHWH as the redeemer of Israel. The present suffering of YHWH's people is a consequence of both the enemies' plundering and the people's rebellion against YHWH. By describing in further detail YHWH's salvation for his people, our current parallel sequences not only continue from the preceding pair in explaining the content of YHWH's action,<sup>8</sup> they also bring up the central issue of YHWH's

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<sup>8</sup> It is indeed not a coincidence to find in the concluding line of 44:23 this pregnant little clause,

unique sovereignty in preparing the audience for the next pair of sequences.

#### 8.4 Isaiah 44:24-45:17 & 45:18-46:13

Probably because he has wrongly included 44:24-45:8 as the concluding element of the preceding sequence, Goldingay finds it difficult to carry on with his analysis beyond Isaiah 41-44. However, it is quite obvious that 44:24 begins a new sequence which focuses on the relationship between YHWH and Cyrus. The disputation in 44:24-28 argues that YHWH, who is the supreme creator of everything (v.24), is also the one who commands Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem (v.28). Then we find in 45:1-8 an oracle by YHWH promising help and power to Cyrus (vv.1-3), but it is done for the sake of Israel (v.4). Despite the fact that Cyrus does not know YHWH (v.5), he will accomplish the plan of YHWH, so that all will recognize the sovereignty of YHWH who controls everything (v.7). Another disputation follows in 45:9-13, where once again the sovereign power of YHWH over Cyrus is affirmed (vv.12-13). The sequence finally concludes with a salvation promise in 45:14-17, when the nations at last realize that YHWH alone is 'El hiding

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כִּי-עָשָׂה יְהוָה (for YHWH has made).

himself' (v.15).

The parallel sequence begins again with a disputation (45:18-19), in which not only the notion of YHWH's sovereignty as the supreme creator is reiterated (v.18), but YHWH also denies that he has ever spoken 'in hiddenness' (v.19a). In the following trial speech (45:20-25), YHWH once more challenges the nations to recognize him as the only 'El victorious and saviour' (v.21b). A further disputation in 46:1-7 brings out the contrast between the idols which need to be carried but cannot rescue, and YHWH who carries and rescues Israel (vv.2-4). With the final pericope of another word of exhortation in 46:8-13 (Hermisson 1991:127), YHWH again affirms his unique sovereignty (v.9), reiterates his control over Cyrus (vv.10-11), and repeats his intention to bring salvation to his people (vv.12-13).

Thus it is clear that the two parallel sequences of 44:24-45:17 and 45:18-46:13 share the common theme of YHWH's sovereignty. The focus of attention has shifted from YHWH's action (41:1-42:17) to its redemptive content (42:18-44:23), and now to YHWH's sovereign power that guarantees its accomplishment. The fall of the great power of Babylon and the rebuilding of Jerusalem have been brought up in passing, and they will constitute the focus for the next pair of sequences.

Meanwhile, we propose the following outline for  
44:24-46:13:

44:24-45:17 (Sequence E)

45:18-46:13 (Sequence F)

1. Disputation on YHWH's sovereignty

44:24-28

45:18-19

YHWH's control over Cyrus  
to rebuild Jerusalem.

YHWH speaks victory not  
in hiddenness.

2. Oracle to Cyrus / Trial speech

45:1-8

45:20-25

YHWH creates everything.

YHWH alone is saviour.

3. Disputation on YHWH's sovereignty

45:9-13

46:1-7

YHWH's sovereignty as  
maker.

YHWH carries Israel but  
idols need to be carried.

4. Promise of salvation / Exhortation

45:14-17

46:8-13

YHWH is El hiding  
himself.

YHWH alone is El who  
brings salvation.

**8.5 Isaiah 47:1-48:22 & 49:1-26**

Our next sequence contains four pericopae

all focusing on the destruction of Babylon, and is paralleled by another sequence highlighting the restoration of YHWH's people and the city of Zion. The taunt song on Babylon of chapter 47 provides an appropriate beginning by announcing the fall of this great world power. The city of Babylon, which used to boast herself as the 'queen of kingdoms' (v.5), will suffer the same fate of 'bereavement and widowhood' (v.8) as the city of Zion did. This is all because of YHWH taking vengeance on behalf of Israel (vv.3-4), and Babylon, despite her rich resources, will be left without a saviour (vv.13-15). That such a proclamation is apparently difficult to believe may be seen from the following two disputations (48:1-11 & 12-16). In the former YHWH declares that he will carry out his salvation not because of Israel, for he knows all along that the people are of a rebellious nature (vv.4 & 8). Rather he will act for the sake of his own name (vv.9 & 11). In the latter the love of YHWH for Israel is emphasized as the cause of divine vengeance against Babylon (v.14b). The sequence finally concludes with YHWH's promise of redemption and success for his people in 48:17-22, and they are urged to leave Babylon, which is doomed for destruction (v.20).

But there is also another aspect of YHWH's salvation for his people, namely, the gathering of

Israel from exile and the rebuilding of the city of Zion, and they now become the focus of the next sequence. It begins with the servant song in 49:1-7, where despite his weakness (v.4) and humiliation (v.7a), Israel is not only being restored and brought back from afar, but he will also be a light to the nations, bearing witness to YHWH's faithfulness (vv.5-6 & 7b). The subsequent promise of salvation (49:8-13) expands on the same motifs of restoration and guidance by YHWH as he helps and comforts his people, stressing once more his sovereign power. In the third and fourth pericopae the focus of attention is shifted to the city of Zion; nevertheless the theme remains that of the gathering in of the children of Israel from all nations. 49:14-21 is again a word of disputation over YHWH's faithfulness, asking if YHWH has forgotten Zion. But just as YHWH has intended a more honourable mission for his debilitated servant, here YHWH also promises a greater glory for the bereaved and barren mother (vv.18-21). The final salvation promise of 49:22-26 once more concludes with YHWH's sovereign power over the kings of the nations, so that all will recognize that YHWH is the saviour and redeemer of his people.

Consequently, we propose the outline for the pair of sequences G (47:1-48:22) and H (49:1-26) as follows:



47:1-48:22 (Sequence G)

49:1-26 (Sequence H)

1. Taunt song / Servant song

47:1-15

49:1-7

Destruction of Babylon.

Restoration of Israel.

2. Disputation / Promise of salvation

48:1-11

49:8-13

YHWH declares and will act  
for his own sake.

YHWH delivers and will  
lead his people back.

3. Disputation on YHWH's faithfulness

48:12-16

49:14-21

YHWH loves Israel, so he  
acts against Babylon.

YHWH loves Zion, so he  
gathers in her children.

4. Promise of salvation

48:17-22

49:22-26

YHWH promises guidance,  
with his people leaving  
Babylon.

YHWH promises victory  
over nations, with all  
acknowledging his power.

**8.6 Isaiah 50:1-51:8 & 51:9-52:12**

Our next sequence in 50:1-51:8 begins with a word of disputation (50:1-3) addressed to the children

of Zion. YHWH denies that he has been forced to surrender his sovereignty over his people (v.1), asking rhetorically whether as the creator he is powerless to deliver them (vv.2aβ & 3), because it seems that his own people, apparently out of fear and doubt, fails to respond to his summons (v.2αα). The pericope is followed by a servant song in 50:4-11, where the people is challenged to remain faithful and trusting in YHWH even in the most adverse situations (vv.5-6 & 10). These first two pericopae are not only closely linked together by the repeated formula of שׁוּבוּ and יְהוָה (vv.1, 8-9, & 10-11), they also share between them this motif of the people's trust in YHWH as well. The sequence then moves on to its climax in the threefold promise of salvation (51:1-3, 4-6, and 7-8), which begins each of its sub-sections with the phrases 'Listen to me!' (vv.1 & 7) or 'Attend to me!' (v.4). YHWH first of all reminds his people how he has blessed their ancestor Abraham with many offspring (v.2) and how, as he will do the same for Zion in her ruins, her children will indeed respond in joy and exultation (v.3). Secondly, YHWH invites his people to compare his everlasting salvation with the transient heavens and earth (v.6), promising repeatedly that he will bring along his victory with his powerful arm (v.5). Finally, YHWH confronts his people with their fear of the reproach and taunts of their enemies (v.7). It is significant to note that here is the unique place

within Isaiah 40-55 where the familiar formula 'Do not fear' of the salvation oracle carries a direct object. Nor is it without cause that YHWH's salvation is first compared with the heavens and earth, for in this way the absurdity of the fear of a mortal being is brought out with much forcefulness (v.8). As a matter of fact, what the people should learn to fear is YHWH and nobody else (50:10).

In our opinion, the second threefold promise of salvation (51:9-16, 17-23, & 52:1-6) marks the beginning of yet a new sequence. The loud and clear repetition in form must be sufficient to alert us that we are moving into the parallel element of our pair of sequences. At the same time, the elaboration of the mythical motif of YHWH's conquest over Yam (51:9-10 & 15) also reminds us of the disputation word (50:2b) at the beginning of the preceding sequence. However, the parallelism lies unmistakably between the two pericopae of the threefold promise. In fact, 51:9-16 repeats the motifs of comfort and joy in 51:3, the metaphor of the arm of YHWH in 51:5, and the encouragement not to fear a mortal being in 51:7. It is therefore beyond any doubt that the second sequence starts with a summary of the preceding promise of salvation, and then moves on to further reassurances such as the removal of YHWH's wrath from Jerusalem to her tormentors (51:17-23), or the

restoration of Zion for the sake of YHWH's name (52:1-6). The three sub-sections once again begin similarly with a double imperative 'Awake! Awake!' (51:9 & 52:1) or 'Arise! Arise!' (51:17), but this time the call is shifted from addressing the arm of YHWH to summoning the city of Jerusalem. In the following pericope 52:7-10 (a Zion song?), the return of YHWH to Zion is announced, and even the ruins of Jerusalem are expected to respond in joy to their powerful redeemer. The concluding word of exhortation (52:11-12) commands the people to 'come out' (repeated thrice). If we do not *a priori* think of the often over-emphasized theme of the second Exodus and too hastily supply the name of Babylon here, the picture that best fits its literary context is rather a procession from Jerusalem to welcome the return of YHWH. The imperative **צֵא** (come out!) has indeed been used before in Isa 48:20 as referring to Babylon, but the verb is too general in its meaning to carry a technical or restrictive sense. On the other hand, the verb **צָרַח** (to depart; v.11a) is also employed in Isa 49:21 as referring to the deportation of Zion's children, and it appears that this is precisely the incident with which v.12a is making a contrast. Barstad, as always, thinks that these two verses should never be understood as 'that the exiles shall go out of Babylon' (1989:105), but we do not agree with him in seeing here a command for the new Israel to go forth in holy war

against her enemies, for it is clearly a time of victory and salvation and not of conflict and warfare. Thus this final pericope not only echoes through its double imperative the salvation promise at the beginning of the sequence, but it also answers by its urgent summons of the people to 'come out' YHWH's question at the very beginning of the preceding sequence (50:2a), 'Why is it that I came but there was nobody?'

The outline for the two sequences in 50:1-51:8 and 51:9-52:12 is therefore of a palistrophic nature, the significance of which we shall see when the macro-structure of Isaiah 40-55 is identified:

#### 50:1-51:8 (Sequence I)

##### 1. Disputation on YHWH's sovereignty

50:1-3

YHWH is not powerless to deliver his people.

##### 2. Servant song

50:4-11

The people is urged to fear and trust in YHWH.

##### 3. Promise of salvation (threefold)

51:1-3

Zion will be repopulated.

51:4-6

YHWH's salvation is everlasting.

51:7-8

Do not fear a mortal's reproach.

51:9-52:12 (Sequence J)

4. Promise of salvation (threefold)

51:9-16

Do not fear, for YHWH is redeemer.

51:17-23

YHWH's wrath removed from Jerusalem.

52:1-6

Zion restored because of YHWH's name.

5. Zion song

52:7-10

YHWH returns to Zion.

6. Word of exhortation

52:11 & 12

Come out to meet YHWH!

**8.7 Isaiah 52:13-54:17 & 40:12-31**

Our next sequence contains the servant song in 52:13-53:12 and the two salvation oracles in 54:1-10

and 11-17. All three pericopae share the following three major motifs, namely, the humiliation suffered because of apparent desertion by YHWH (53:2-4; 54:4-6; and 54:11), the transformation of weakness and defeat into strength and victory (53:11-12; 54:2-3 & 7-10; and 54:14b-17a), and the joy of fruitfulness out of a seemingly barren life (53:8-10; 54:1; and 54:11b-14a). In fact, the last oracle concludes with a sudden reference to the success of YHWH's servants (54:17b), which appears to serve only the purpose of echoing with the beginning of the servant song, where YHWH clearly promises the exaltation of his servant (52:13). Such an announcement is astonishing because the devastating experience of merciless defeat and callous exile has been taken very seriously here, and the radical reversal of fortune of YHWH's people is made possible only by his sovereign power. Thus these pericopae are in fact once again about the supremacy of YHWH's powerful redemption, as the imagery of his arm (53:1) and his authority over the enemies of his people (54:16) has indicated; but these oracles also underline the unexpected theological conceit that YHWH's power and sovereignty have been ultimately revealed through the powerlessness and submissive suffering of his people.

The parallel to 52:13-54:17 is to be located not in the adjacent chapter 55 but rather in the

beginning at chapter 40. 40:12-31 presents a parallel sequence sharing this central theme of YHWH's power and sovereignty. The incomparability of YHWH has been graphically portrayed in the first two pericopae of disputations (40:12-20 & 21-26), where YHWH's supremacy is affirmed uncompromisingly against the nations (vv.15-16), the idols (vv.19-20), the human rulers (vv.23-24), and the heavenly hosts (v.26). The final disputation in 40:27-31 not only contrasts human and divine strength, it further promises YHWH's help to the fainting and weary ones (vv.29 & 31). The two sequences of 52:13-54:17 and 40:12-31 thus present the penultimate elements of a macro-structure of palistrophe in Isaiah 40-55, which is also reflected in the micro-palistrophic structure of 50:1-52:12. The following is our proposal for the outline of these two sequences:

<u>40:12-31 (Sequence CC)</u>	<u>52:13-54:17 (Sequence DD)</u>
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1. Disputation / Servant song

40:12-20	52:13-53:12
YHWH's sovereignty	YHWH's arm manifested
contrasted with	through his suffering
nations and idols.	servant.

2. Disputation / Oracle of salvation

40:21-26	54:1-10
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YHWH's sovereignty	YHWH's redemption shown
contrasted with rulers	with his abandoned wife.
and stars.	

### 3. Disputation / Oracle of salvation

40:26-31	54:11-17
YHWH will strengthen	YHWH has ultimate control
the weary ones.	even over the enemies.

## 8.8 Isaiah 40:1-11 & 55:1-13

Our final pair of sequences contain what are generally considered to be the prologue and epilogue of Isaiah 40-55, and they constitute the first and last elements of the macro-palistrophic structure of these sixteen chapters. The first sequence in 40:1-11 begins with a word of comfort addressed to Jerusalem, who is also the representative of YHWH's people (vv.1-2). The middle pericope consists of not only a description of YHWH's theophany (vv.3-5), but also a discussion on the relevance of the message to be proclaimed (vv.6-8). The frailty of human life is contrasted with YHWH's power, yet at the same time the little exhortation also brings out the faithfulness of YHWH's word against the fickleness of human constancy. The sequence then concludes with a promise of salvation (vv.9-11), urging Jerusalem to play the role of a herald and to announce

the imminent coming of YHWH, who appears as the triumphant shepherd-king to rule and guide his people. As a prologue to Isaiah 40-55, these eleven verses do embody in a remarkably succinct manner all the major motifs to be developed in the following sequences.

The last sequence in 55:1-13 begins with a fresh summons addressed to the people of YHWH to participate in a covenant feast (vv.1-5). If the prologue hints strongly at the breaking up of the covenant between YHWH and his people (40:2), here the epilogue offers first of all a reassuring message of covenant renewal (55:3). The second pericope in 55:6-11 urges the people to put their trust in the sovereignty of YHWH's plans (vv.8-9) and the efficacy of his powerful word (vv.10-11). Thus the contrast between divine and human reliability occupies both middle parts of the prologue and epilogue, but here the argument is turned into an exhortation to seek YHWH (vv.6-7). The final promise of salvation (55:12-13) pictures a joyful procession of the people in response to YHWH's coming, and there is once again no binding evidence for us to bring in here the departure from Babylon or the desert journey (Barstad 1989:75-88). The focus is actually on the welcoming of their sovereign king who has finally come as announced (40:9-11). As a whole, the epilogue echoes the basic motifs of the prologue, but at the

same time it also moves on to highlight the appropriate reaction of the people confronted by the manifestation of YHWH's sovereignty and power.

The following is the outline for our final pair of beginning and concluding sequences:

40:1-11 (Sequence AA)

55:1-13 (Sequence BB)

1. Word of comfort

40:1 & 2

55:1-5

YHWH will end the  
suffering of Jerusalem.

YHWH will renew the  
covenant with his people.

2. Word of exhortation

40:3-8

55:6-11

YHWH's power vs human  
frailty.

YHWH's way vs human way.

3. Promise of salvation

40:9-11

55:12 & 13

YHWH's coming announced.

Response to YHWH's coming.

## 8.9 Summary

We may now present the macro-palistrophic structure of Isaiah 40-55 as follows:

### (I) 40:1-11

The announcement of YHWH's coming.

40:1-2	Word of comfort
40:3-8	Word of exhortation
40:9-11	Promise of salvation

### (II) 40:12-31

The manifestation of YHWH's power.

40:12-20	Disputation (1)
40:21-26	Disputation (1)
40:27-31	Disputation (1)

### (III) 41:1-20 & 41:21-42:17

YHWH's action vs idols' inaction.

41:1-7	Trial speech
41:8-16	Oracle of salvation
41:17-20	Promise of salvation
41:21-29	Trial speech
42:1-9	Servant song
42:10-17	Promise of salvation

(IV) 42:18-43:21 & 43:22-44:23

YHWH's salvation witnessed by Israel.

42:18-25	Disputation (2)
43:1-7	Oracle of salvation
43:8-15	Trial speech
43:16-21	Promise of salvation

43:22-28	Disputation (2)
44:1-8	Oracle of salvation
44:9-20	Taunt song against idols
44:21-23	Word of exhortation

(V) 44:24-45:17 & 45:18-46:13

YHWH's sovereignty over all.

44:24-28	Disputation (1)
45:1-8	Oracle to Cyrus
45:9-13	Disputation (1)
45:14-17	Promise of salvation

45:18-19	Disputation (1)
45:20-25	Trial speech
46:1-7	Disputation (1)
46:8-13	Word of exhortation

(IV') 47:1-48:22 & 49:1-26

Babylon's fall and Zion's restoration.

47:1-15 Taunt song against Babylon

48:1-11 Disputation (2)

48:12-16 Disputation (2)

48:17-22 Promise of salvation

49:1-7 Servant song

49:8-13 Promise of salvation

49:14-21 Disputation (2)

49:22-26 Promise of salvation

(III') 50:1-51:8 & 51:9-52:12

Response to YHWH's redemption vs doubt.

50:1-3 Disputation (2)

50:4-11 Servant song

51:1-8 Promise of salvation

51:9-52:6 Promise of salvation

52:7-10 Zion song

52:11-12 Word of exhortation

(II') 52:13-54:17

YHWH's power revealed through powerless people.

52:13-53:12 Servant song

54:1-10 Oracle of salvation

54:11-17 Oracle of salvation

(I') 55:1-13

The joyful reception of YHWH's coming.

55:1-5            Word of comfort

55:6-11          Word of exhortation

55:12-13        Promise of salvation

On the basis of the above analysis, we may conclude by offering the following four observations in relation to the theme and structure of Isaiah 40-55:

First of all, there are a total number of forty-eight individual pericopae in Isaiah 40-55. Twenty-four of them are grouped into eight sequences, each consisting of three pericopae; while the other twenty-four are grouped into six sequences, each consisting of four pericopae. The two pairs of sections I (40:1-11) - I' (55:1-13) and II (40:12-31) - II' (52:13-54:17) form the enclosing members of the palistrophe, with sections I-I' highlighting the coming of YHWH, and sections II-II' reflecting on the manifestation of YHWH's power. On the other hand, the rest of the sections (III-III', IV-IV', and V), which all contain double sequences, may be seen as being grouped into three parts (III-IV, V, and IV'-III'), each ending with a word of exhortation (44:21-23; 46:8-13; and 52:11-12). However, as part of a palistrophic

arrangement, the parallel sections III (41:1-20 & 41:21-42:17) - III' (50:1-51:8 & 51:9-52:12) both focus on the motif of actions (divine and human) versus inaction, while sections IV (42:18-43:21 & 43:22-44:23) - IV' (47:1-48:22 & 49:1-26) again both elaborate on the content of YHWH's salvation for his people. Section V (44:24-45:17 & 45:18-46:13) is then the centre of the palistrophe, concentrating on the unique sovereignty of YHWH over Cyrus, which is finally recognized by the nations as well. The resulting palistrophic structure suggests clearly a literary design behind the sixteen chapters, whereas the arrangement of individual pericopae into relatively short sequences reflects the oral setting of the prophetic preaching. Gitay is probably correct in arguing that in ancient times all 'written material was written to be heard' (1980:191). Moreover, the various sections are apparently not marked by hymns in the closing positions,<sup>9</sup> and all the passages which are usually considered as late additions (such as the servant songs or the polemics against idols) are shown to be integral elements with their respective sequences. This unity between content and form in Isaiah

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, having examined all the hymnic material in Isaiah 40-55, Deming concludes that '[t]hey are not hymns, nor are they conclusions to larger portions of the book' (1978:192).



40-55 leads us to support the conclusion that the present arrangement goes back to the prophet himself.

Secondly, the theme of YHWH's sovereignty and power dominates the macro-structure of Isaiah 40-55, just as it has preoccupied the individual pericopae of both the polemical and salvation speeches. The motifs of YHWH as creator and redeemer depend heavily on the argument that he is recognized universally as the supreme God in control of everything. The fact that the central core of the palistrophe (Isa 44:24-46:17) is focused on YHWH as the unique El himself provides an unmistakable confirmation of the essential significance of our theme in these sixteen chapters.

Thirdly, the argument for YHWH's sovereignty has been carried out not only within the context of creation myths, but also much more realistically within the setting of historical events such as the meaning of Israel's defeat and exile or the implication of Cyrus' speedy victory and success. The message of Isaiah 40-55 challenges its audience to verify YHWH's supreme authority and power in both their *Sitz im Glauben* and their *Sitz im Leben*. That YHWH's saving purpose is to be achieved by an unknowing servant and that the manifestation of his divine power is to be located in the weaknesses and sufferings of his people are only

further indications of his unrivalled sovereignty over forces both friendly or hostile.

Finally, the movement of the sequences of texts in Isaiah 40-55 aims for both theological sophistication and practical response in faith and action. The focus of attention is obviously the rebuilding of Jerusalem, with the people of Israel returning not just from Babylon, and the faithful response to YHWH not being restricted to the act of 'returning'. Theologically speaking, they must learn to confess YHWH as their only saviour against the competitive claims of the nations' deities; and the apologetic reasoning certainly reflects a significant advance towards a thoroughly monotheistic faith, albeit the actual use of language or concepts recognizes squarely the serious threat of the reality of evil forces hostile to YHWH and his people. However, having dealt with their fear and doubts, the prophet expects his audience to translate their faith into commitment and participation in the redemption of Israel to become YHWH's servant among the nations. Their previous sufferings as well as their impending restoration all witness to YHWH's sovereign control over the former and the new things. The coming of YHWH as the creator and redeemer of Israel also marks a new sense of mission for Israel as YHWH's servant and witness.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 9.1 In Retrospect

The exploration of the theological relationship between the motifs of creation and redemption within the Hebrew Bible has led us to focus our attention on Isaiah 40-55, where there is not only an unusually high concentration of the Hebrew vocabulary of both salvation and creation, but also a unique interaction between these two major biblical motifs. Following the lead of form-critical scholarship, we have examined in Isaiah 40-55 a total number of twenty-seven pericopae belonging to the four basic genres, namely, the disputations, the trial speeches, the oracles of salvation, and the promises of salvation. Both the salvation oracles and the trial speeches display clearly a tripartite structure, which in particular helps us to delineate afresh all salvation oracles, and to redefine the so-called trial speeches against Israel as further

examples of disputations. On the other hand, the disputations are less consistently marked by their form, but they may be identified through their common intentions of arguing for either the sovereignty or the faithfulness of YHWH. Similarly, we are not persuaded that a genre of proclamations of salvation may be distinguished by a consistent structure. On the contrary, these promises of salvation are seen as less rigidly constructed salvation speeches alongside the more well-defined oracles of salvation, just as we observe among the two groups of polemical speeches, the less consistently structured disputations appear alongside the more formal trial speeches. Moreover, the salvation promises often constitute the concluding passage of an extended unit of three or four pericopae. Thus we have discovered that it is the *Sitz im Text* rather than the *Sitz im Leben* which contributes more to our understanding of the pericopae; and hence we are less inclined to agree with the form critics in their assumptions of the independence of these pericopae and their subsequent redaction based entirely on the *Stichwort* principle. Furthermore, such a recognition also helps us to envisage a macro-palistrophic structure for Isaiah 40-55, which is more likely to be the original work of the anonymous prophet than the genius of a later redactor.

We have in fact arrived at the conclusion that throughout these four basic genres, there is but one central theme: the incomparable sovereignty of YHWH. Seven disputations (Isa 40:12-20, 21-26, 27-31; 44:24-28; 45:9-13; 45:18-19; and 46:1-7) argue for YHWH's unique power and supreme authority from the well recognized hymnic confession that he is both the creator and the lord of history. The need to defend YHWH's sovereignty arises when fear and doubts are apparently a widespread phenomenon among Israel, especially when they, as the people of YHWH, have experienced defeat and exile under the imperial forces of the nations who worship other deities. Another six disputations (Isa 42:18-25; 43:22-28; 48:1-11, 12-16; 49:14-21; and 50:1-3) argue against the impression arising from such defeat that YHWH must either be powerless or have abandoned his own people; for the exile is caused by Israel's sinfulness, whereas YHWH remains the sovereign God who is in control, and is committed to deliver Israel despite their rebellious nature. The four trial speeches (Isa 41:1-7, 21-29; 43:8-15; and 45:20-25) refute the rivalling claims of the deities of the nations by calling Israel as witness to YHWH's sovereign control over both past and present events, who thus proves himself to be the only God and saviour for all. The five oracles of salvation (Isa 41:8-16; 43:1-7; 44:1-8; 54:1-10, and 11-17) elaborate on the fact that

YHWH is the creator of Israel. Unlike the idols which are dependent on the skill of their human craftsmen, YHWH is in absolute control of everything happening to his people, and hence he is able to promise deliverance and restoration to Israel and Zion. The unique sovereignty of YHWH is further highlighted by the declaration that he has also created Israel's enemies. In a brief survey of the use of the verb **בָּרָא** in the Hebrew Bible, we confirm that the idea of divine creation carries the nuance of power rather than novelty. The role of YHWH as his people's redeemer adds a further dimension of love and commitment to this overall emphasis of power and authority. As the sovereign creator and redeemer, YHWH promises a radical reversal of fortune for his people: from defeat to victory, from desolation to growth, from weakness to strength, and from exile to home-coming. The five promises of salvation we have examined (Isa 41:17-20; 42:10-17; 43:16-21; 45:14-17; and 49:8-13) continue to focus upon the absolute power and unique supremacy of YHWH. The imagery of the transformation of nature represents the restoration of Israel rather than the so-called second Exodus, but it ultimately points again to the sovereignty of YHWH. However, just as there is a subtle irony in identifying the blind Israel as the witness of YHWH's uniqueness, here we also find an equal degree of theological sophistication in the recognition

that YHWH's sovereignty may be hidden from the eyes of the nations.

The macro-palistrophic structure of Isaiah 40-55 confirms the predominance of the theme of YHWH's sovereignty and power. Apart from the prologue (Isa 40:1-11) and the epilogue (Isa 55:1-13), the two enclosing sequences explore the manifestations of YHWH's power: less surprisingly, in direct contrast to the imperial forces (Isa 40:12-31); but more unexpectedly through the suffering of his people (Isa 52:13-54:17). The central core (Isa 44:24-46:13) also highlights YHWH's supreme authority over Cyrus, arriving at the climactic confession by the nations that YHWH is the unique God and saviour (Isa 45:14b-15). The intermediate sequences pinpoint YHWH's powerful action in contrast to the impotence of the idols (Isa 41:1-42:17 and 42:18-44:23), while developing the substance as well as the consequences of YHWH's saving power (Isa 47:1-49:26 and 50:1-52:12). The argument for YHWH's sovereignty is presented not only with the dramatic imagery of creation, but also more realistically within historical events such as the meaning of Israel's exile and the implications of Cyrus' victory.

Consequently, the prophetic message of Isaiah 40-55 is primarily about YHWH the sovereign

creator and the unique redeemer. The motif of YHWH as the creator of the world and of Israel refers to his sovereign power and supreme control over everything: a sharp contrast is drawn between YHWH who makes and shapes history and the idols which are made and shaped by human hands. As the sovereign God and only saviour, YHWH promises deliverance and help for his people. The motif of YHWH as the unique redeemer of Israel does not only concentrate on YHWH's faithful commitment (despite Israel's faithless rebellion) to his people; it further draws out the full dimension of divine power necessary to command the pagan conqueror Cyrus in bringing about the downfall of the imperial power of Babylon as well as the restoration of Jerusalem. The confession of YHWH's incomparability is never an academic doctrine born in religious rhetoric or enthusiastic imagination; it is always a profound insight - not only based on sound theological reflections, but also grounded firmly in the experience of faith tested by historical ambiguities.

## **9.2 Critical Response**

As a result of our own investigation, we must conclude that von Rad's interpretation of creation as always subordinated to salvation is inadequate. In his discussion of the Isaianic texts, von Rad fails to recognize both the sophisticated nature of the motif of



creation as well as the predominance of the theme of YHWH's sovereignty in Isaiah 40-55. It is true that in the disputations on YHWH's sovereignty, the prophet draws upon both YHWH's power in creation and his control in history as support; but when he comes to the definitive proof of YHWH's sovereignty in the trial speeches, it is Israel's witness to YHWH's authority over past and present events that settles the case. To be more precise, YHWH's sovereignty is illustrated by both his powerful acts in creation and history; but divine creation has not been employed to provide either a foundation for faith or a foil for the message of salvation. Therefore, although we agree with von Rad that it is important to investigate the relationship between creation and salvation as a theological issue (and not just as a traditio-historical one), his argument of creation faith only fulfilling an ancillary function in relation to salvation faith must be rejected in the context of Isaiah 40-55.

On the other hand, Rendtorff's observation that creation faith functions in Isaiah 40-55 not as a past event, but as speaking into the present situation is correct, even though in our opinion the same function may also be located within the psalms. This is indicated, for example, by the repeated refrain of Ps 136, which emphasizes the continuity of YHWH's

faithfulness into the present. However, his support of von Rad's idea that creation and salvation are one and the same act must be deemed unacceptable. We have observed that the language of creation and of election are used side by side to enhance the sovereignty of YHWH vis-à-vis the idols' dependence on human workmanship; but this does not necessarily result in the identification of YHWH's election of Israel and his role as Israel's creator as one and the same thing. Moreover, the attractiveness of seeing a special kind of relationship between YHWH the creator and Israel his creation may be irresistible, but such an interpretation simply cannot be sustained when the prophet declares that YHWH has created the enemies of Israel as well.

Harner's attempt to find a more indispensable role for creation in Isaiah 40-55 is successful, for it is obvious that the motif of creation is never only a foundation for faith in the salvation message. But his proposal that creation is the bridge between the old and new eras of salvation still remains under the shadow of von Rad's approach of subordinating creation faith to salvation faith. Furthermore, the concern over the discrepancy between YHWH's judgement and salvation is only found in a small number of disputations and salvation oracles; it is not the major theme of the prophetic message, and we do not agree that

the key to the theological relationship between creation and salvation in Isaiah 40-55 lies here.

StuhlmueLLer's proposal of a 'creative redemption' in Isaiah 40-55 suffers from the *a priori* assumption of *creatio ex nihilo*, as well as from his very general exegesis which only pays lip service to the literary genres. Against his main arguments we must point out that a consistent understanding of the motif of creation is more inclined towards the connotations of power and control than that of newness or wonder. This is especially the case with the use of the theologically significant verb **בָּרָא** throughout the entire Hebrew Bible. On the other hand, we find his argument for the logical connection between universal redemption and cosmic creation very doubtful. In the trial speeches, where the clearest announcement of YHWH as the unique saviour for all (Isa 45:22) is found, there seems to be no reference to the motif of creation at all. YHWH is the only saviour because he is the only God in control of human history, not because of his role as creator of the world. In other words, his ability to save is grounded on his sovereignty. Finally, StuhlmueLLer's insistence on the prophet's independence from earlier traditions, and hence that the idea of first creation is developed from Israel's redemption, remains unconvincing because of the overwhelming evidence of a continuity of the

traditions of creation as discussed by Rendtorff, Albertz, and Haag. In spite of the fact that Stuhlmueeller's monograph is often quoted by other biblical scholars as the authoritative study on the themes of creation and redemption in Isaiah 40-55, we beg to disagree entirely with his thesis.

It seems to us that Haag has embarked on the right track when he argues that behind the two creation traditions employed in Isaiah 40-55, there is always the theme of YHWH's incomparability and his sovereign control over Israel. Thus it is very disappointing to find in his discussion of the interaction between creation and redemption that he has abandoned this important theme and talks only about creation serving as the background to the universality of the new salvation, or the new salvation as a new creation despite the disruption of the old history of salvation. Apparently Haag considers the reconciliation between YHWH and his people to be the most crucial issue tackled by the prophet, but this is obviously irreconcilable with the fact that the theme of Isaiah 40-55 is that of YHWH's incomparable sovereignty. In our opinion, the paramount question must be the onslaught of the patent success of the idol-worshippers on Israel, and consequently the forceful challenge from the pagan deities to the sovereignty of YHWH (Eberlein 1986:183-189).

Thus we heartily welcome Hermisson's critique of both views: that the use of the argument of creation in Isaiah 40-55 has to do either with a pedagogical purpose subordinated to the salvation message, or with a predicament in relation to the exile invalidating the history of salvation. Nevertheless, we do not agree that the reference to creation is required to provide a worldwide horizon for YHWH's new salvation, or that creation is salvation and *vice versa*. Here we are again of the opinion that because the saving act of YHWH involves an inevitable conflict of powers, the motif of YHWH the sovereign creator is therefore drawn in to explain his divine control over everything. The unity of the two motifs of creation and redemption lies in the theme of the sovereignty of YHWH; it does not imply either that the one motif is subordinated under the other, or that the two motifs are in fact denoting one and the same reality.

### **9.3 Theological Implications**

Based on our conclusion that it is the theme of YHWH's sovereignty which underlies the interaction between the two motifs of creation and redemption in Isaiah 40-55, we may consider briefly the following four implications:

First of all, the identification of the major theme of divine sovereignty in the message of Isaiah 40-55 not only offers us a firm foundation to evaluate the crisis of faith among the people of Israel in exile, but also provides a solid starting point for us to examine the critical issue of the theological unity of the book of Isaiah. For a long time there have been various discussions on the relation between Isaiah 40-55 and the Psalter; among them Eaton's hypothesis of the influence of the pre-exilic Autumn Festival at Jerusalem on the prophetic work (1979) may represent a more extreme example. However, scholars' attention has also been legitimately drawn back to the more immediate literary context of the book of Isaiah (cf. Ackroyd 1981, Clements 1982, Brueggemann 1984, Ollenburger 1987, Evans 1988, and Conrad 1991). Our observations concerning the theological motifs as well as the theme and structure of Isaiah 40-55 may furnish a point of anchorage in the comparison with Isaiah 1-39. Apart from the examination of the development of major motifs in these two parts of the prophetic book, it is essential to raise questions about whether Isaiah 1-39 exhibit similarly a macro-structure or a pre-eminent theme of the sovereignty of YHWH.

Secondly, our conclusion that in Isaiah

40-55, the two motifs of creation and redemption are distinct but closely related under the theme of divine sovereignty also alerts us to the problem of superimposing dogmatic categories on to biblical themes. Goldingay treats creation and redemption in the Hebrew Bible as two divergent ideas that need to be unified theologically (1987:200-239). Our examination of the two biblical motifs in Isaiah 40-55 shows that they are already unified under the theological theme of YHWH's unique sovereignty. Here we agree with Barton in seeing the job of a biblical theologian as enabling 'the systematic theologian (or the Christian believer) to hear more clearly what the text is saying, and to construct this [sic; his?] theology, or practise his faith, as someone to whom the Bible has been enabled to communicate its own message in its own way' (1982:108). In order to arrive at a fuller understanding of the doctrines of creation and salvation, it will be necessary to extend our exegetical study on the interaction between these two closely related biblical motifs into other parts of the Hebrew Bible. The Psalter and the book of Job may be the next appropriate places to continue such an investigation.

Thirdly, our argument that creation in Isaiah 40-55 means power not novelty, which is supported by a brief survey on the use of בָּרָא throughout the

Hebrew Bible, suggests that we need to become more aware of the legacy of the dogmatic proposition of *creatio ex nihilo*, which continues to dominate and distort our characterization of creation in the Hebrew Bible (Levenson 1988:xiii). It is indeed refreshing to read from a Christian *Dogmatik* that 'the biblical witness understands creation. . .as God's battle against all destructive powers' (Prenter 1960:180). The biblical doctrine of creation has more to do with a sovereign creator here and now than the origin of species there and then, and we must endeavour to 'cast back historically and exegetically to the histories of the biblical tradition, in order with their help to arrive at new interpretations. . .which will be relevant for the present day' (Moltmann 1990:xv).

Finally, our contention that in Isaiah 40-55, redemption involves not only forgiveness but also a conflict of divine powers reiterates the challenge of 'a one-dimensional view of salvation' by Lochmann (1980), who insists that salvation in the full biblical sense means both reconciliation and liberation. For the people of Israel in exile, the prophetic message of divine redemption reaffirms YHWH's faithfulness; but it emphasizes even more his sovereign power to deliver them from the hostile forces human or divine. Whereas Aulén (1931) has persuasively argued for the importance of the



theme of conflict in our understanding of the doctrine of soteriology, we are never left with the decision of supplanting one model by another. On the contrary, we must always endeavour to retain the full spectrum of biblical nuances of the theological doctrine of salvation (Gunton 1988:27-52 and McIntyre 1992:26-87). Divine salvation indeed promises reconciliation and forgiveness from the merciful God; but it must also undertake to deliver humanity, who is perhaps 'more sinned against than sinning' (Shakespeare: *King Lear* III.ii.59), from the powerful forces of evil.

## ABBREVIATIONS

A	Aquila
AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANETS	Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies
AST	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
ASTI	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BDB	F.Brown, S.R.Driver, and C.A.Briggs, <i>Hebrew &amp; English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvTh	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BHK	<i>Biblia Hebraica</i> ed. R.Kittel
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
Bijdr	<i>Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor Philosophie en Theologie</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BLit	<i>Bibel und Liturgie</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BT	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur ZAW
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBSC	Cambridge Bible for School and College
CTM	Calwer Theologische Monographien
DNT	Dissertationes Neerlandicae Theologicae
DSB	Daily Study Bible
EpR	<i>Epworth Review</i>
ET	English Translation
EvTh	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FS	Festschrift
FThL	Forum Theologiae Linguisticae
®	Septuagint
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. E.Kautsch; tr. A.E.Cowley

HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
Θ	Theodotion
IB	Interpreter's Bible
Int	Interpretation
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBLMS	JBL Monograph Series
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	JSOT - Supplement Series
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
KB	L.Köhler and W.Baumgartner, <i>Lexikon in Veteris Testamenti Libros</i>
KD	Kerygma und Dogma
KThR	King's Theological Review
L	Leningrad Codex
LQ	Lutheran Quarterly
ℳ	Masoretic Text
Mss	Manuscripts
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NRTh	Nouvelle Revue Théologique
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
Or	Orientalia (Rome)
OTG	Old Testament Guide
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
POS	Pretoria Oriental Series
Q <sup>a</sup>	The Isaiah Scroll of St.Mark's Monastery
Q <sup>b</sup>	The Isaiah Scroll of the Hebrew University
RB	Revue Biblique
REB	Revised English Bible
Σ	Symmachus
Ⲅ	Syriac
SBFLA	Studii Biblici Franciscani Liber Annuus
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SEÅ	Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
StTh	Studia Theologica
Ⲛ	Targum
TDOT	G.J.Botterweck and H.Ringgren (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>

ThBü	Theologische Bücherei
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
TThZ	Trierer theologische Zeitschrift
TS	Theological Studies
TynBul	Tyndale Bulletin
UF	Ugarit Forschungen
VF	Verkündigung und Forschung
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	Westminster Theological Journal
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZdZ	Die Zeichen der Zeit
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

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